Hafa Adai!

Happy New Year!

Saipan Tribune

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

What's your level of optimism for 2008?

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INSIDE

Business Award

The *Saipan Tribune* recognizes Sablan Topline Cleaning Agency and its owner, Lisa Pangelinan Sablan, in this inaugural edition of the Small Business Person of the Year award.

BUSINESS...Page 13

Bhutto Dynasty

Benazir Bhutto's 19-year-old son was named symbolic leader of her party Sunday.

ASIA...Page 15

Pop Culture Moments

Rather than speculate on an uncertain future, let's take a chronological journey back through a year of pop culture moments.

LIFE $ STYLE...Page 17

PERSON OF THE YEAR

Tina Sablan

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Just before exploding onto the local political scene a year ago, Christina-Marie E. Sablan sat at her computer and poured her thoughts on everything that worried her about the Commonwealth. Nine pages later, she birthed a "Commonwealth Manifesto" that would set the course for a year of critical life changes for her personally, and of tumultuous debate within the community.

"I can remember how I was feeling before I sent out that manifesto," relates Sablan. "It was in the early hours of the morning. I was scared. But I felt it was something I had to do. At that point, I had already written it, and you don't write nine pages for nothing."

Sablan's manifesto began with a call for the Commonwealth to be "brutally honest with ourselves and each other… [and] to own up to the mess we have all played a part in creating." It ended with a proposal for a healthy dialogue, a venue for everyone to speak up and come up with solutions.

Consistent with her manifesto, Sablan began organizing public forums. The gatherings drew tens, sometimes hundreds, of participants, and covered a wide range of topics—from labor and immigration, to an elected attorney general and a smaller Legislature. The

> One big deciding factor for me in running for office was the fact that, everything I'd been doing as a citizen—the public forums—is to encourage people to engage in dialogue and share their concerns with me, as I do the same with them. I realized I could do that, and more, in public office.

fruits of those public forums were then submitted to the Legislature and other government agencies for enactment of legislation or amendment of regulations.

Her efforts were not limited to stirring discussion. In May, she initiated separate petitions to establish guberna-

See TINA on Page 4

Newsmakers of the Year. **PAGES 2-3**
Top Stories of the Year. **PAGES 4-9**

Newsmakers of 2007

David B. Cohen and James Benedetto

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

Where would the year 2007 be without David B. Cohen and James Benedetto?

Cohen, already a larger-than-life persona in the Commonwealth in his capacity as deputy assistant secretary for insular affairs, became even more prominent this year with his advocacy for the federalization of the CNMI's immigration system and the granting of improved immigration status for the islands' nonresident workers—a position that did not exactly endear him to the Fitial administration, which opposes both.

Viewed by nonresident workers as a champion for their cause, Cohen was, however, criticized by the local government, which accused him of pushing for the removal of the local government's right to self-government. His role in the drafting of the federalization bill for the U.S. Senate was characterized as a push for an agenda premised on dated or false information.

The announcement in December of his resignation from the Interior Department was met with mixed feelings in the region.

As Washington Representative Pete A. Tenorio described it, Cohen's resignation is "a sad day for us in the Pacific."

Cohen, according to Tenorio, has had an integral role in shaping island policy and promoting a positive vision for the Marianas for the past five and a half years. He is also recognized for raising visibility of island issues in Washington.

Cohen

Benedetto

"His commendable leadership qualities will be missed by all who have had the privilege of working with him throughout his tenure at OIA," said Tenorio.

Cohen was responsible for administering financial assistance to U.S. territories and Freely Associated States. He initiated the Office of Insular Affairs' annual Business Opportunities Conference that has attracted several hundred potential investors, giving them the opportunity to meet with island leaders. The most recent conference highlighted the current and future potential in the Pacific Region and was hosted on the island of Guam.

He has also been known as a strong advocate for both local and foreign workers in the CNMI.

What was once a good friendship with the Fitial administration turned sour because of Cohen's initiatives that led to congressional bills that would federalize the commonwealth's labor and immigration system.

Cohen had explained that after spending nine days of intensive fact-finding on Saipan earlier this year, he became convinced the "the center of gravity of public opinion in the CNMI, and the center of gravity of fairness is reflected in the pro-federalization policies that we have advanced."

Despite the falling out with some CNMI government officials, Cohen said, "I will always be a friend of the CNMI."

Benedetto

Wherever Cohen was on the island, so there was Federal labor ombudsman James Benedetto.

Appointed by Cohen to his post in 2002, Benedetto has since been living up to his title, defending the rights of workers and advocating for equal treatment of guest workers.

Benedetto repeatedly reminds

See DAVID on Next Page

Happy New Year...
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Gregorio Cruz

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

TaoTao Tano president Greg Cruz caused quite a stir in 2007.

He first made his appearance back in May 2007 when he spoke out about the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s "outrageous increases in rates."

According to Cruz, he has been tracking the rates for the past months and concluded the "that the problem lies between the government and CUC."

Cruz

Since then, he has met with lawmakers to vent frustration with almost everything happening on the islands.

Cruz has written numerous letters to the editor in half a year than some who will actually take the time to in a lifetime. He has done news time in many of the issues regarding the CNMI government as well.

Cruz, who claims to be representing at least 600 locals, formed the TaoTao Tano group "to protect the indigenous people of the CNMI," otherwise known *taotao tano*, and to maintain government operational integrity.

In May 2007, Cruz told CNMI lawmakers that the indigenous people are disappointed with the government's alleged failure to put locals first on its list of priorities.

"The legislators haven't done much to correct the situation. They have forgotten us—their own people, who put them in power. We are frustrated, angry and disappointed," Cruz has said.

"We want new, strong leaders—ones who are willing to take on corruption," he added.

Cruz ran for office in the 2007 election. He raked in 150 votes but it was not enough for a seat in the House.

Since then, Cruz has complained about the integrity of the Commonwealth Election Commission and has gone as far as filing a complaint at the Attorney General's Office.

However, despite his defeat in his attempt at office, Cruz said he is continuing to help the indigenous and advocate for transparency in government.

He has been known to bump heads with representative-elect Tina Sablan, questioning her certification as a representative candidate and her joining hands with nonresident workers.

TaoTao Tano's videos on YouTube, which Cruz defines as truth, have also been objects of controversy.

Some people share the same views as Cruz, while some have taken his statements as nothing more than racism or ignorance.

To Cruz, "it's simply just standing for what is right. Standing up for our people."

Jerry Custodio, Boni Sagana, Wendy Doromal

Custodio

Sagana

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
REPORTER

The awakening this year of the social consciousness of the islands' nonresident worker population could be credited in large part to the effort of three persons human rights activist Wendy Doromal, Human Dignity Movement officer Jerry Custodio and Dekada Movement officer Boni Sagana.

Doromal

Their organizing effort, their vocal call for human rights, and the campaigns they've launched has awakened many alien workers to the potential for change that they represent as a united group.

Before even Public Law 15-108 was signed, Sagana, Custodio and Doromal made it a point to ensure the what they believe is right for all people is heard. Their efforts culminated in the Unity March, held Dec. 7, which saw thousands of alien workers and local residents joining forces to call for unity on the islands.

Sagana, along with Custodio, involved the Dekada group in the first-ever congressional hearing held on Saipan in August 2007. The hearing, according to Custodio, was to support the immediate passage of the federalization bill.

In July 2007, Custodio and Sagana launched a signature campaign in support of the CNMI federalization bill pending at the U.S. Senate.

Whether it would hurt him or not, Custodio has been vocal on his thoughts on federalization the whole year. He has written letters to the editor voicing his thoughts and concerns issues. According to Sagana, he had lost his job simply by standing up for what he felt was right.

Doromal launched a letter-writing campaign in December 2007 to press the U.S. Congress into acting on the call for improved immigration status for long-term alien workers in the CNMI. Doromal, who flew all the way from Florida to attend last month's historic Unity March, promised that she will personally hand-deliver the letters to officials in Washington, D.C.

The three helped organize the Unity March that drew thousands of residents and nonresidents. Its goals were to dramatize protest against the new local labor law, to express support for the extension of federal immigration law to the Commonwealth, and to call on the U.S. Congress to retain the provision that would grant improved status to long-term alien residents in the bill that would federalize immigration.

DAVIS

From Page 1

guest workers that they have constitutional rights as well as any other citizen.

During December's Unity March, Benedetto said that employers and workers need to know what their rights and responsibilities are under the law, whether workers organize a strike or a march.

Benedetto also said employers are also welcome to come to his office to learn more about their responsibilities and rights.

Benedetto has been accused of spending more time campaigning for the federalization of the CNMI than assisting workers. He has also been called out by the governor as unfit for his job. Fitian, in fact, wrote to Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne not to renew Benedetto's contract.

Kempthorne re-appointed Benedetto to the post for another three years.

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Islands mourn five fallen soldiers in '07

The CNMI mourned the death of four sons and a daughter this year.

The year started off with the death of Lance Cpl. Adam Quitugua Emul, who was killed in Iraq on Jan. 29, 2007. Emul was laid to rest on his home island of Rota. Close to 500 Rotanese attended the memorial service, weeping silently as they paid their last respects to the fallen soldier, who left behind three grieving children and wife Stellita.

Soon after, SPC Leeroy Apatang Camacho, was killed in Iraq on Feb. 9. It was Leeroy's wife, Velma Matagolai Camacho, who is staying in Texas who informed the islands of the sad news. Leeroy was the fourth from the youngest among the 10 siblings. Leeroy was recruited in Guam to join the military in 2004. Leeroy was later stationed in Texas. Also on the same year, he went back to Saipan and married Velma. In 2005 he brought his wife to Texas along with their three children who are all boys and now 8, 7, and 3 years old.

Leeroy was deployed to Iraq in October 2006.

PFC Victor Michael Fontanilla of Tinian was killed on May 17, 2007 by a bomb blast while on routine mission. The soldier's stepfather, Ramon Ray Quichocho, said his family would remember Fontanilla for being a respectful man. "He was an honest boy. I call him boy because for me he will always be my boy," Quichocho said.

Emul

Charfauros

Camacho

Fontanilla

Camacho

Fontanilla is survived by his wife, Noel Mokuahi, and children, Mykal-Christian Kila and Jonathan-Tobias Ho'opakele.

"We deeply miss him. We are very proud of him. We know that he died defending our country," Quichocho said.

June was another sad month for the islands, with the news of the death of CPL Joe Junior Gogue Charfauros, who is best remembered by his loved ones as a joker and someone who always brought a smile to the faces of family and friends. Joe Junior's mother Annie described her second oldest son as having a good disposition in life.

Joe Junior is survived by his wife Stellita and three kids, Mikeangela, Junelle and Joe II.

A tragic incident inside a U.S. military base in Bahrain resulted in the death of three U.S. Navy sailors, including Anamarie San Nicolas Camacho of Tinian on Sept. 24, 2007.

Camacho, 20, was one of the two female U.S. Navy sailors shot dead by a male colleague. Camacho was just 20 years old.

The other victim was Seaman Genesia Mattril Gresham, 19, of Lithonia, Georgia. The other victim was Seaman Genesia Mattril Gresham, 19, of Lithonia, Georgia. The shooter was identified as Clarence Jackson, reportedly an ex-boyfriend of Gresham.

All three sailors were members of the base's security forces department. The Navy continues to investigate the shootings.

Camacho received full military memorial service, led by the 9th Regional Readiness from Hawaii and Saipan.

Visiting Admiral William French presented the American flag that had been draped on Camacho's casket to the sailor's mother, Jovita San Nicolas Paulino. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Worker sets self on fire at Labor

2007 was remembered as the year when a jobless Nepalese man set himself on fire along the hallway of the Department of Labor.

Buddhi Lal Dhimal, 49, died at St. Luke Hospital in the Philippines as a result of the injuries almost a month after he burned himself.

Police said on April 24, after learning that he is to be deported back to his country, Dhimal poured flammable liquid on his body and set himself on fire before a Labor enforcement officer outside the Labor Enforcement Office.

Buddhi Lal Dhimal, a Nepalese, lies on the floor after burning himself at the Department of Labor office in San Antonio in April.

No other person was injured and the fire did not spread after some Labor officers pushed Dhimal to the floor and sprayed him with a fire extinguisher.

He suffered second and third degree burns on his body and face. A former security guard, he had been on Saipan since 1997 and was once arrested in 2006 for allegedly overstaying in the CNMI. Two deportation cases had been filed against him, but were subsequently dismissed.

Dhimal filed a Labor complaint against Osman Gani, owner of Lucky Security Service. He prevailed after Labor awarded him $2,024.08 in unpaid wages and liquidated damages. Labor, however, denied his request for transfer and ordered him to depart the CNMI.

TINA

From Page 1

torial runoffs and to extend the Open Government Act to the Legislature. The popular initiatives received substantial support, but failed to make it to the ballot. (The runoff initiative, as proposed by the Legislature, eventually was placed on the ballot and ratified by the voters. The Legislature entertained a watered-down version of the government transparency bill before leaving the issue hanging.)

By August, Sablan has established herself as a community leader. Recognizing this, the U.S. House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs invited her to serve as a witness at the first-ever congressional field hearing in the Commonwealth. Sablan testified in support of federalization of CNMI immigration.

In the same month, she pulled another surprise on the community by announcing her candidacy for the House of Representatives.

"One big deciding factor for me in running for office was the fact that, everything I'd been doing as a citizen—the public forums—is to encourage people to engage in dialogue and share their concerns with me, as I do the same with them. I realized I could do that, and more, in public office," she says.

She adds that she hopes to open the door for the many young, bright locals who genuinely care about the CNMI's long-term interests.

Sablan went on to run what possibly is the most unconventional campaign seen in the Commonwealth. Her campaign surrounded around direct interaction with the voters. Save for letter to the editor published for free in newspapers, she did not pay for any advertising. Ultimately, she secured a seat in the Lower House, spending only $675 on her campaign.

She explains her campaign style: "So much of political campaigns had focused on advertising…your face, your family. I really wanted to get away from that. I wanted to make sure people understood where I stood on issues, whatever the issues might be. And I wanted people to vote for me based on that, not because I'm a Sablan, not because I had my name on a billboard, but because they had talked to me at a gathering, or I met them at their house, or they read what I had written. Even if they don't agree with me on the issues, they must know can trust me to advocate what I think would be in the best interests of the people."

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
Human rights advocate Wendy Doromal and Representative-elect Tina Sablan lead the Unity March press conference at a pavilion along Beach Road in Garapan in December.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
U.S. House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs chair Rep. Donna Christensen greets hundreds of nonresident workers during the United CNMI Nonresident Workers prayer vigil for federalization in front of Kristo Rai Church in Garapan in August. Christensen conducted a field hearing on a bill proposing to extend federal immigration laws to the CNMI.

She adds that she plans on being as frugal in office as she was getting there. Two weeks before she assumes office, she has no staff lined up. She has no plans to lease a vehicle, like most lawmakers do, or spend money on unnecessary travel.

Her family will play little role in her political work, she said. "When I first came back and was looking for job, my dad said he wanted me to get a job on my own merits, not because I had connections to anybody. That's kind of the same ethics that we were all raised with. I hope they will hold me to the same standards, that nobody should get any special favors because I'm in office," she says.

For all that she has done over the past year, Sablan never anticipated to receive all kudos. Criticism, she says, is expected for anyone who takes a position that seems controversial and that challenges the status quo.

But she admits she finds one criticism particularly hurtful—that she is "anti-local." The accusation stems from her support for the guest workers with regard to labor and immigration issues. She says it would be nice if discussion was kept focused on the issues.

Despite the personal attacks she has suffered lately, the 26-year-old representative-elect looks forward to the next two years of politics ahead of her with high hopes.

"Looking back on everything that has happened since January, I definitely feel a lot less scared," Sablan said. "I went in there not expecting it to be all distasteful. I certainly expect it to be challenging, enlightening, and I hope also fruitful. I hope that out of all of the disagreements that are happening right now, we are moving as a community toward a productive solution."

And that is what sets Sablan apart. Despite all the acrimony thrown her way, she has managed to keep a level head, a laser beam focus on the tough issues facing the Commonwealth, and a will to bring all people together for the betterment of the islands. That she has managed to keep her sense of humor and her inimitable smile for everyone despite all the controversies speak a lot of her strength of character and the steely resolve she has shown not to stoop to the muckraking so typical of local politics should stand her in good stead when she takes office. And that is why Tina Sablan is this year's *Saipan Tribune* Person of the Year.

FIRST TASTE OF FEDERALIZATION

Minimum wage hiked to $3.55

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

While the Commonwealth's lowest-paid workers rejoiced after getting a 50-cent wage increase, July 24, 2007, was a sad day for many businesses in the Commonwealth.

That was when H.R. 2066 came into effect, 60 days after President Bush signed the bill into law. The new law extended the federal minimum wage to the CNMI and American Samoa.

"It's a sad and hard day for many businesses," said Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Juan T. Guerrero in an interview the day the minimum wage increase came into effect.

Guerrero said that CNMI employers have no choice but to comply with the federal minimum wage.

"As an employer, I'd like to comply with the federal minimum wage. I want to make sure that my employees are taken cared for. We are already prepared for this adjustment so effective [July 25], anybody working below the set minimum wage will be getting 50 cents increase," he said.

Guerrero, whose family business employs some 300 staff, said the first round of increase is non-substantial. In his company, he said only about three workers are getting the lowest rate of $3.15 per hour.

Other business owners and executives earlier said that the local business community is ready for the initial increase. Overall, Guerrero said that local businesses would be able to bear the first and second rounds of increases. However, he warned that any wage hike would result in higher prices of goods and services in the CNMI.

The last time the CNMI's minimum wage was increased to the erstwhile $3.05 was 11 years ago.

That 50-cent increase last July 24, which hiked the CNMI minimum wage of $3.05 an hour to $3.55 an hour, will kick off the nine-step increase of 50 cents every year. The next increase is due on May 25 this year and every May 25 thereafter until the CNMI minimum wage reaches the federal level of $7.25 an hour.

H.R. 2066 also includes a provision requiring the U.S. Labor secretary to conduct a study to assess the impact of the wage increases and to project the impact of any further wage increase on living standards and employment rates in the CNMI and American Samoa. The study must be done two years and two months after the bill becomes law.

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THE TOP NEWS OF THE YEAR

Federalization of the CNMI's immigration

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Federal efforts to take over the Commonwealth's labor and immigration system dominated local news this year.

For the local government and business community, 2007 kicked off with federalization jitters. Democrats got hold of the U.S. Congress and gave every indication that the islands would not be left out in their legislative plans.

True to form, the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives passed a federal minimum wage bill within its first 10 days in office. The bill included provisions to raise the local wage floor over time until it reaches federal level.

Almost simultaneously, the Fitial administration hired a lobbyist, the Washington, D.C.-based Oldaker, Biden & Belair firm, to block CNMI wage and immigration legislation in Congress.

The wage bill did not get as swift an action in the Senate as it did in the House. But this provided no relief for the local critics of federalization, as the Senate soon enough floated the proposal to take over immigration as well.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held an oversight hearing on labor, immigration, law enforcement, economic conditions in the CNMI. The federal government, represented by Deputy Assistant Interior Secretary David Cohen and Federal Labor Ombudsman Jim Benedetto, spoke in favor of federalization. The local government, with the exception of Resident Rep. Pete A. Tenorio, spoke against it.

Following the hearing, the Senate committee asked the Interior Department to draft a bill imposing federal immigration policy on the CNMI. The debate simmered, as Cohen made a nine-day trip to the islands soliciting views from the public and private sectors, as well as various community groups.

By May, U.S. lawmakers had reached an agreement on the minimum wage bill, now a rider to the Iraq spending measure. President Bush signed the bill on May 25, 2007, starting the clock on the gradual wage increase.

The first 50-cent hike occurred in July, but not to the complete satisfaction of workers. Left with no choice but to comply with the wage increase, many local employers cut work hours and benefits to cope with the additional cost.

On June 15, 2007, Hawaii Sen. Daniel Akaka introduced the CNMI immigration bill in the Senate. A month later, a separate immigration bill was introduced in the Lower House. The House version was virtually identical to the Senate bill, but included a provision granting the CNMI a congressional delegate with limited voting powers.

The Senate committee held another hearing on July 19, 2007, with witnesses reiterating positions they had expressed in the first hearing.

The House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs made history in August, as it held the first-ever field hearing on Saipan. The hearing also centered on labor and immigration issues.

Amid the debate, the issue that proved to be the most controversial was a provision in the bill to grant permanent status to long-time foreign workers in the Commonwealth. The proposal sparked hope among nonresidents, and stirred antagonism among certain community members, most vocally the Taotao Tano citizen group.

This provision was removed from the House bill passed by the Lower House in mid-December. Instead of the one-time grandfathering provision, the latest version of the bill provides a mechanism for the Secretary of the Interior to recommend improved status for guest workers within two years.

The Senate and House versions of the immigration are now identical, with the introduction of S. 2483 in the Senate. The omnibus bill, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Bingaman, lumps the text of the House immigration bill with some 50 other House-passed measures.

The bill is expected to pass the Senate, and be on its way to the President's desk this month.

New blood shakes up unorthodox election

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The new districting, the rise of independent candidates, and the eventual triumph of fresh blood set this year's election apart from previous polls.

From the campaign to the vote tally, the Nov. 3 midterm election proved to be quite unconventional for the Commonwealth.

The election season got off to a rough start as a result of a redistricting order by the court. A fifth election district was created on Saipan and the total number of lawmakers was increased from 18 to 20. Candidates, along with thousands of voters, were transferred to new districts.

This year's election saw the number of independent candidates more than triple compared to the last midterm election. Twenty of the 74 partisan candidates decided to go solo, chucking the party system that had always been a key feature of local politics.

The independents outnumbered candidates of any one political party, a phenomenon that one local political observer described as both a good and a bad thing.

On one hand, college instructor Samuel McPhetres said, the rise of independents gave more people a chance to participate and gain experience in the political arena. On the other hand, it made the election process harder and more expensive for the candidate, who must conduct a campaign without the support of a political party.

But campaign spending varied for different independent candidates, as recent filings showed.

An older timer like Rota Sen. Paul A. Manglona, for instance, spent nearly $40,000 to get re-elected. He did so without the help of his old organization, the NMI Republican Party.

Meanwhile, first-time candidate Tina Sablan needed only $675—about 15 percent of the $4,773 donated to her campaign—to get elected to the House of Representatives. Sablan ran a campaign based on sending editorial letters to local newspapers, organizing public gatherings to discuss community issues, and writing personal letters to absentee voters.

Voters also displayed a thirst for new blood and new ideas this election. They installed seven first-time candidates, ensuring that the 16th House of Representatives will have a good mix of old guard and new guard. The new lawmakers elected to officer are Sablan, Ralph Anthony Torres, Raymond Palacios, Joseph James Camacho, Edward Salas, Rosemond Santos, and Victor Hocog.

For the first time, there will be two extra lawmakers in the Lower House: Santos and Camacho.

Amid the victory of newcomers, however, are the re-election of three incumbents in the Senate and the return of the NMI Republican Party in the Lower House.

GOP, which suffered an unprecedented defeat in the 2005 election, secured 12 of the 20 House seats. The party has already announced the selection of incumbent House Minority Arnold I. Palacios for the speakership. As the new speaker, Palacios will preside over three former speakers—Diego Benavente, Heinz Hofschneider, and the incumbent, Oscar M. Babauta.

Meanwhile, a power shakeup is expected in the Senate.

The 16th Legislature will take their oath of office on Jan. 14, 2008.

Robbery incidents rampant in 2007

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

The Year 2007 is remembered for the surge in robbery cases.

Robbery incidents reached alarming proportions as robbers operated almost year-round. From snatching to armed robbery incidents, the suspects struck at nighttime, in the wee hours, and even broad daylight.

The victims ranged from unsuspecting women, mostly alien workers and tourists, to poker arcades, small stores, and even a major hotel.

Covering police beat in the CNMI for more than a decade now, this writer noticed that 2007 was the worst in terms of robbery cases that this small island has ever experienced. Although many were injured, fortunately no lives had been claimed. So far.

Snatchers started in January, victimizing five female alien workers in Chalan Kanoa, Garapan, and Sadog Tasi. Incidents would go on until early March, for a total of 15 victims. A few of the victims, including a Japanese chef, were injured when the robbers grabbed their bags.

By June, some 15 poker robbery cases have already been recorded.

There were no robbery activities reported in August and September but in October, masked men staged four armed robberies in four days, victimizing three stores located in Koblerville, Navy Hill and Dandan. The Marianas Resort Hotel in Marpi was also robbed.

In November, a motorist was robbed in Koblerville, then two men in Santa Claus hats robbed a store in Kannat Tabla. December ended with three armed robberies in five days.

The dying gasps of an industry in decline

By FERDIE P. DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

Once the CNMI's major industries, the garment industry's rapid decline was particularly evident in 2007 when factories one after the other either closed or announced shutting down operations early this year.

The factories cited the same reasons for the closures: Adverse economic conditions brought about by the application of the federal minimum wage in the CNMI, the stiff competition from China and other Asian countries, increased costs of conducting business in the Commonwealth, and lack of orders.

The closures of factories on Saipan actually started in 2005 when the World Trade Organization lifted trade quotas. This has allowed Third World countries—where labor is cheaper—to export their garments to the U.S.

The latest casualty on the islands is L&S Apparel Inc., which ceased operations yesterday. This leaves 14 remaining garment factories open, including eight that have announced closures in the past two months.

The year was greeted with Michigan announcing on Jan. 31 its closure by March 30, 2007. The factory conducted business in the CNMI for over 20 years. It used to manufacture Gap and Banana Republic apparel.

Michigan's closure faced no major problem as Labor allowed 147 of its alien workers to seek new employers.

In March, Grace International Inc. announced its closure effective April 7, 2007. The closure affected about 85 alien workers and 30 resident workers. The Susupe-based factory began operations in mid-'80s. It used to have 300 to 400 employees. Grace International also did not experience any major problems in its closure.

In May, Top Fashion management's announcement of the Tanapag factory's closure effective July 2 turned ugly when disgruntled employees held a sit down strike.

Disgruntled employees reportedly held hostage some factory managers by preventing them from leaving the premises. As a result, police came and arrested seven factory workers. Some workers, however, complained that they were subjected to police brutality when some officers allegedly sprayed them with pepper mace and kicked and hit many of them, including women.

The workers then walked toward the Federal Ombudsman's Office in Puerto Rico for assistance. They claimed that many of them had just arrived on Saipan and that they paid large amounts of money to recruiters in China.

The workers also marched toward the Horiguchi Building in Garapan. The marching and protest ended when three representatives of Chinese workers met with representatives from the CNMI Department of Labor and Chinese Economic Development Association at the Federal Ombudsman's Office.

The last two months of the year witnessed seven other garment factories announcing their closures and suspension of business operation, mostly to take effect in 2008. They were L&S Apparel Inc., Jin Apparel, Sam Kwang Saipan Corp., Neo Fashion Inc., Winners Corp., Mirage, and Commonwealth Garment Manufacturing Inc.

Jin Apparel, through counsel Eric Smith, explained that the company did not renew the contracts of majority of its workers as the factory is obtaining other contracts for non-knit projects that would require new bigger computerized machines. He said Jin Apparel is not closing.

Thus as of yesterday, the 14 still open factories are: Commonwealth Garment Manufacturing Inc.; Marianas Garment Manufacturing; U.S. CNMI Development; Onwel Manufacturing; United International Corp.; Mirage Saipan Inc.; Uno Moda; Rifu; Kyung Seung Saipan Inc.; Jin Apparel; Neo Fashions Inc.; Winners Corp.; Sam Kwang Saipan Inc.; and Poong In Saipan Inc.

Six of those factories, however, already announced closure by 2008. They are Mirage, Commonwealth Garment Manufacturing, Neo Fashions, Winners Corp, Sam Kwang, and Poong In Saipan.

CNMI used to have 34 garment factories, all located on Saipan. The garment industry used to contribute some $60 million in direct taxes a year. For user fee alone, which represents 3.7 percent of local industry sales, the government used to collect an average of $30 million a year.

According to Richard A. Pierce, the governor's special assistant for trade relations and economic affairs, once the second 50-cent minimum wage increase takes effect this summer, the remaining garment factories that have not yet announced closures will also cease operations.

Glad Tidings to you
for the New Year!

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KUMHO ACQUISITION OF LAOLAO BAY

The deal of the year

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

It's been touted as the acquisition of the year, one that is expected to breathe new life into the local economy, which in all intents and purpose, has been in life support the past couple of years.

Kumho Asiana's Feb. 28, 2007, acquisition of the sprawling LaoLao Bay Golf Resort property in Kagman and its subsequent $100-million resort development plan was indeed a breakthrough for the CNMI economy—one that its government and business leaders believe will finally bring investor confidence back to the islands.

To signify his gratitude, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial declared May 27, 2007 as Kumho Asiana Day.

"The CNMI is truly blessed that Kumho Asiana is committed to expanding its investment here. This is the type of investment we need to revive our economy, the type that will help bring more investments," Fitial said while witnessing the Legislature grant Kumho Asiana's request for a fresh 40-year lease of the Kagman property last Nov. 30.

"I am very thankful for Asiana's investment and increased flight frequency to the CNMI. The Legislature's approval of Kumho-Asiana's new lease agreement is among the most significant economic developments in 2007."

The extension of the lease agreement was widely seen as the final impediment blocking the South Korean conglomerate's giant plans in the Commonwealth.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Asiana Saipan general manager Kwang Joong Kim talks to Gov. Benigno R. Fitial after the proclamation signing ceremony making May 27, 2007 as Kumho Asiana Day at the Governor's Conference Room on Capital Hill in May 2007.

Public Lands Secretary John S. Del Rosario echoed the governor's optimism.

"This is the very thing we need now, given that the tourism industry is dying. Kumho's investment gave us a shot in the arm," he said.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce Juan T. Guerrero said he was delighted by the Legislature's unanimous vote in favor of Kumho Asiana's request.

He said that local community would benefit from the Korean company's investment. He said the construction project, as well as the increased flights by Asiana Airlines, would only mean more tourists, more business for the local private sector, and more revenue going into the government coffers.

Jerry Tan, chairman of the Marianas Visitors Authority board of directors, said the Legislature's approval of the lease "will send a positive signal to international business community."

"Hopefully, this is just the beginning of investments into the CNMI. The future definitely looks brighter," he said.

Kumho Asiana bought the LaoLao Bay Golf Resort from UMDA and the purchase agreement was signed by executives of both companies last Feb. 28.

Two years ago, UMDA's predecessor, Saipan Laulau Development Inc. cited a loss of about $50 million when it sold the company to UMDA.

Saipan Laulau said it had invested a total of $61 million to the business but it was only negotiating to sell the company to UMDA for about $8.5 million to $10 million.

The original lease for the Kagman property was given to S.C. Properties (Saipan) Inc. on Oct. 13, 1989. The lease was assigned to Saipan Laulau on Aug. 5, 1993.

Kumho Asiana plans to build 12-story buildings with 128 rooms, as well as seven luxury villas, on the 161-hectare property. The development will also improve facilities for golfers. In addition to three new recreation clubhouses for golfers, current golf courses will be redesigned to meet world golf championship standards.

Asiana Airlines, which will have 18 flights to Saipan weekly by January 2008, plans to continue adding flights to back up Kumho's investment in the golf facility.

The 8th largest family run conglomerate in South Korea, Kumho Asiana has more than two dozen subsidiaries in such industries as automotive, construction, leisure, logistics, real estate development, chemicals, and airlines. Established in 1946, the group's headquarters are in Sinmunro Jongro-gu Seoul, Korea.

TINIAN NO LONGER LONE CASINO ISLAND

Saipan says 'no,' Rota says 'yes'

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

While Saipan voters overwhelmingly thumbed down the Saipan casino initiative, their counterparts in the southernmost part of the Commonwealth—Rota—decided that their island is now ready to join Tinian in the world of casinos.

The results of the Nov. 3, 2007, elections saw voters from Saipan who said "No" outnumbering the "Yes" votes, 4,721 to 3,492. The "No" to casino prevailed in all Saipan districts.

It was different story, though, on Rota, as the "Yes" votes outnumber the "No" voted 788-144.

The casino initiatives needed two thirds of registered voters to pass.

Just this Friday, Rota's quest for its own casino industry hurdled another obstacle when the House of Representatives approved $500,000 for the island's casino startup operations

The appropriation bill for Rota's future casino industry actually nearly failed at the lower chamber when House Bill 15-326 initially received only 12 votes in the House. To pass, the bill needed 14 votes, or three-fourths of the House membership.

Three representatives—Cinta M. Kaipat, Joseph DeLeon Guerrero, and Ray Yumul—abstained from the vote. Three others were absent: Reps. Martin Ada, Florencio De Leon Guerrero, and Justo S. Quitugua.

At the urging by Speaker Oscar M. Babauta, the three who had abstained changed their vote and supported the bill. The measure now heads to the Senate.

Rota's casino commission will be allowed to impose a license application fee of up to $100,000 and an annual license fee not exceeding $200,000 for the first license year.

A Rota gaming tax equivalent to 5 percent of the gross gaming revenue will also be collected from casino operators.

The Rota Economic Development Task Force, led by former Commerce Secretary Pedro Q. Dela Cruz, was behind the Rota Casino Act that would allow an unlimited number of casino licenses to be issued by the future gaming commission.

Since 1991, the Rota casino initiative had been placed on the ballots. Rota politicians, however, noted a growing acceptance of casinos based on the trend of votes in past elections.

Gaming on Saipan tries to go through back door

On Saipan, the defeat of the Saipan Casino Initiative proved not to be the end of plans to legalize gambling in the CNMI as the House passed a bill last Dec. 5 allowing for poker, black jack, and baccarat at La Fiesta.

Sponsored by Vice Speaker Justo S. Quitugua, House Bill 15-322 would legalize Texas Hold'em poker games in conjunction with Black Jack and Baccarat games at the former La Fiesta shopping mall. It would also allow the operation of slot machines at La Fiesta and major hotels and resorts.

The move created an uproar from the community and even resulted in Bridge Investment Group, a U.S.-based firm planning to build a hotel and casino on Tinian, putting its project on hold.

"We are very disappointed as this action will negatively impact our project on Tinian. Therefore, our owners want to stop all movement on our project until the Legislature decides what it wants to do," then said Phillip Mendiola-Long, executive vice president of Bridge Investment Group.

In the end, the Saipan gaming bill fizzled as quickly as it emerged as the Senate killed the initiative last Dec. 19.

Eight Senate members voted against House Bill 15-322, as only Sen. Luis Crisostimo from Saipan was the only member to vote differently—he abstained.

The Senate action was no surprise, as the members from Tinian and Rota previously voiced their opposition to the gaming proposal.

A Saipan gaming industry was seen to pose a significant threat to the existing casino industry on Tinian and to the future industry on Rota, which just passed a casino initiative.

The Fitial administration expressed regret over the Senate action. Press secretary Charles P. Reyes Jr. said the government lost an opportunity to save the jobs of nearly 400 employees to be laid off this weekend.

Reyes said the gaming proposal would have generated some $10 million for the CNMI government. Only $7 million was needed to support the costs of keeping the 397 employees.

The CNMI government owns La Fiesta.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 01, 2003

Two whips of nature in 2002

Rota received two knockout punches this year: typhoon Chata'an and supertyphoon Pongsona left the island a total wreck by yearend. Rota residents and their leaders, however, don't sulk over the calamities they get from Mother Nature; they look at disasters as lessons where they can learn valuable lessons from, and as challenges that are meant to make a stronger community out of them.

Ports lockout an eye opener for NMI

The CNMI shipping industry stood guard as it watched a labor lockout event unfold before them. Gripped with fears of possible shortage of basic commodities, local government officials and private sector leaders didn't take the problem lightly. The lockout forced retailers to conduct an inventory of the islands' import stocks, as government leaders initiated a series of discussions to craft safety nets for what could have been an economically and socially distressing development.

NMC reorganization creates an uproar in the community

The entry of new Northern Marianas College president, Kenneth Wright in August 2002, was no big deal, at least to outsiders, until he implemented a campus- wide reorganization on September 24. This move, which resulted in the termination of 11 personnel, created a big uproar among lawmakers and some college staff. The issue also generated mixed reaction from ordinary citizens who were at a time divided as to whether Wright did or did not do the right thing.

January 01, 2004

CHC Volunteers Association

CHC Volunteers Association They achieve what they want and they deliver. This makes the Commonwealth Health Center Volunteers Association a highly esteemed organization in the CNMI community. It may be the essence of knowing exactly who they are, why they exist, and what they need to do. Two months before the opening of the CHC facility in Nov. 1986, CHC Volunteers was formed with the clear mission of helping CHC improve the quality of health care in the CNMI by focusing on raising funds.

TREES: Green for green

Trees The Team Responsible for Environmental Enhancement of Saipan, or TREES, turned one year old in October, about the same time the Commonwealth observed Arbor Month through various activities that generally focused on planting flowering trees and ornamental plants around the island. Just last year, TREES was launched by a group of agency representatives and concerned individuals who landscaped the T-intersection of As Perdido Road and Beach Road with ornamental plants and flowering shrubs.

NMI Crime Stoppers

NMI Crime Stoppers Established in April 1989, the NMI Crime Stoppers has grown to become an integral player in local crime-busting efforts by facilitating community participation in putting a halt to criminal activities. A proof of the major role it plays in maintaining a safe NMI community, January 2004 has been proclaimed Crime Stoppers Awareness Month. No less than the administration lauded the group's relentless pursuit of justice and resolving cases through unique information-gathering techniques that reward tipsters.

January 01, 2005

US military ships to aid in relief efforts

A U.S. carrier battle group steamed toward Indonesia's Sumatra island Friday to spearhead an unprecedented multinational military effort to assist the survivors of last weekend's quake and tsunamis. Naval ships prepositioned on Saipan reportedly left the island to join the relief mission in Thailand. The Associated Press reported that another U.S. marine strike group was sailing westward from the Pacific territory of Guam for the seas off Sri Lanka to buttress the burgeoning global drive to bring water and medical supplies to millions of increasingly desperate people.

Six named Businessperson of the Year nominees

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce today announced yesterday the nominees for the Chamber's 2007 Businessperson of the Year award.

They are:

■ Jim Arenovski of Delta Management Corp.;

■ John Baldwin of Bridge Capital, LLC;

■ Kathryn Barry of Pacific Telecom Inc.;

■ Kwang Joong Kim of Asiana Airlines;

■ Laurie Peterka of Practical Solutions; and

■ Ivan Quichocho of Tan Holdings Corp.

The Commonwealth's preeminent business award, established in 1996, is awarded annually at the Chamber's Installation Dinner.

This year's Installation Dinner will be held on Saturday, Jan. 5, 2008 at Fiesta Resort's Hibiscus Hall, and will feature U.S. Navy Capt. Phillip Sawyer, Commander of Submarine Squadron 15, as keynote speaker.

The event will include a five-course dinner, a three-piece jazz and blues band, and a silent auction, the proceeds of which will benefit the Chamber's Educational Scholarship Fund.

Members of the public are welcome; tickets are $50 per person and may be purchased through the Chamber office at 233-7150, no later than noon on Thursday, Jan. 3.

Arenovski, president-elect of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, is the president of Delta Management Corp., which operates a number of Shell Service Stations on Saipan and Guam and is an authorized distributor of pre-paid cellular phones and cards and long-distance calling cards for Pacific Telecom, Inc. in the Commonwealth and on Guam. Prior to forming Delta Management, Arenovski worked for Shell North Pacific. Arenovski also sits on the board of directors of NMI Crime Stoppers.

Baldwin, a principal and the chief executive officer of Bridge Capital, LLC, has been involved in major financial transactions since 1981, working as an executive or principal in firms that have issued billions of dollars in high yield debt, high yield loans, and invested over $500 million in venture capital. In 1995, Baldwin and a business partner formed Bridge Capital, an opportunity fund, financial services company, and asset manager that specializes in originating high yield loans, investing in opportunistic assets, and providing management services. The company relocated to the Commonwealth in 2006 and has concentrated its growth in Asia and manages affiliated offices in Cambodia, Laos, Macau, and Thailand. Baldwin manages the lending activity of the company and is the head of its investment committee.

Barry, secretary-elect of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, is the marketing manager of PTI, where she manages all marketing and promotional activities for the company. Barry was the Sales and Marketing director of Coca Cola Micronesia and an English instructor at Northern Marianas College prior to joining PTI. Before moving to the Commonwealth, Barry was a manager at both Coca Cola Enterprises and Coca Cola North America Operations. Barry is a member of the Make-A-Wish Foundation board of directors, serves on the selection panel for the CNMI Teacher of the Year, is active in the Rotary Club of Saipan, and volunteers time with World War II veteran groups that visit Saipan. Barry was a nominee for the Guam Businesswoman of the Year award.

Kim, the general manager of the Saipan Regional Sales Office of Asiana Airlines, has been with Asiana for 19 years and served the company in a number of management positions throughout South Korea prior to moving to Saipan in 2005. Kim played key roles in the decision of Asiana Airlines' parent, Kumho Asiana, to purchase LaoLao Bay Golf Course this past year and the company's commitment to building a $70 million resort at that property. With Kim's support, Asiana Airlines has significantly increased its flights between South Korea and Saipan, and will add almost 30,000 more annual inbound seats beginning Jan. 21, 2008, with the addition of three daytime flights weekly between Seoul and Saipan.

Peterka, the proprietor of Practical Solutions, is an independent consultant for a number of companies and professional firms in the Commonwealth. Prior to founding Practical Solutions in 1998, Peterka was a manager for LOMAR CNMI, which operated a gas station, mini-mart, and Hertz Rent-a-Car on Saipan. Peterka also served as the vice president and director of Business Development for The Visitor's Channel on Saipan and Guam. Peterka is a member of the Rotary Club of Saipan, the Marianas Visitor's Authority, and a founding member and board secretary of the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association.

Quichocho, the vice president of Logistics and Corporate Business Development Manager for Tan Holdings, assists with evaluating and developing new business ideas as the company continues to expand and diversify in the Western Pacific. Prior to joining Tan Holdings in 2006, Quichocho spent 16 years with Continental Micronesia, including as manager of Airport Services on Guam and general manager of Continental's operations on Saipan. Quichocho has been a member of the Northern Marianas College board of directors, the Commonwealth Cancer Association, chair of the Airport Operations Committee, and chair of Air Service for the Strategic Economic Development Council, and is currently chair of Marianas Visitor Authority's Air Service Committee.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is the largest private business organization in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, with approximately 170 member companies and individuals. Reservations for the Installation Dinner must be made in advance through the Chamber office at 233-7150. ***(SCS)***

Car hits boy on Middle Road

A 10-year-old boy was injured after a car hit him as he was crossing Middle Road near the Sugar King Monument Friday afternoon.

The boy sustained abrasions in his left hand. He was admitted to the Commonwealth Health Center for a CT scan of the head and neck, according to the Department of Public Safety.

DPS spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said the driver was 37-year-old Albert A. Aberas.

Ogumoro, however, pointed out that alcohol and speed were not factors in this crash.

Ogumoro said the pedestrian crosswalk was located a few feet from the actual point of contact of the boy and the vehicle.

"The weather condition was clear and the road surface was dry," she said.

Preliminary investigation showed that a 1993 Toyota four-door Corolla was traveling north on the inner lane by the Sugar King Monument.

Three children were observed running across the highway. The driver, Aberas, was heading north when another child darted out into the inner lane of the road from the pedestrian side.

Aberas tried to avoid hitting the boy, but was unable to as the car struck the child.

Medics arrived and transported the boy to the Commonwealth Health Center.

The car's front right portion had minor damage.

Meanwhile, two persons were injured during a vehicular hit and run along Beach Road across Hopwood Junior High School on Christmas Day.

The victims—Jia Wang Peng, 23, and Wang Gu, 26, both Chinese, were transported to CHC.

Police were dispatched to the area last Tuesday at 7:45pm after receiving the report.

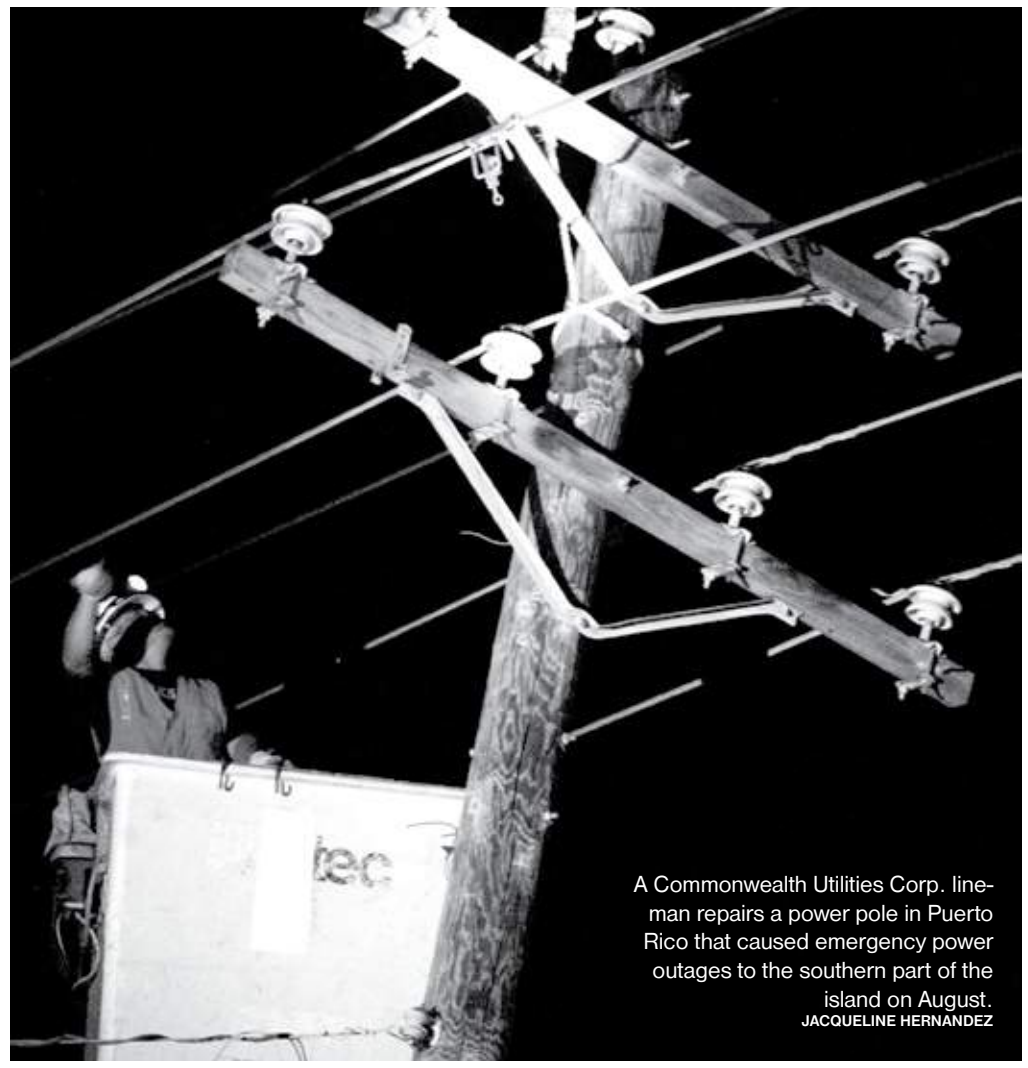
Ogumoro said investigation showed that the victims were struck by a vehicle when they crossed the highway using the crosswalk.

The vehicle then fled the scene.

The victims could not identify the vehicle that hit them, Ogumoro said. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

POWER OUTAGES PLUS HIGH ELECTRIC BILLS

2007 a double whammy for power



A Commonwealth Utilities Corp. lineman repairs a power pole in Puerto Rico that caused emergency power outages to the southern part of the island on August.
JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

By FERDIE P. DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

The year was literally a "dark period" for Saipan. Constant power outages and rotating outages continued to affect homes and cripple the operations of many small establishments.

Announced and unannounced blackouts were triggered by all kinds of causes: Malfunctioning power engines, lack of engine parts, a truck ramming into power poles, power poles replacement, high temperature, rodents, engine overheating, lighting, heavy rains, and strong winds.

It was this year when people actually started to feel the exorbitant electricity billings that kicked in when the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. implemented in July 2006 the power rate increases.

Household customers expressed relief when the Legislature lowered the electric billings by capping it at 17.6 cents per kilowatt-hour for residential customers in October. But it wasn't to last. A little over a month later, the administration adopted emergency regulations, placing the electric fuel rates at an all-time high of 25.8 cents per kilowatt-hour for all customers.

The first week of the year was greeted with outages in many areas on the island when a pickup truck rammed into a power pole in Kagman. The pole was destroyed, causing the entire Feeder 4 to trip off. The power outages and rotating outages became a regular occurrence until September.

In May, consumers were stunned when CUC implemented the then highest ever electric fuel rate of 22.2 cents per kilowatt-hour, which went up to 22.3 cents per kilowatt hour in July.

In August, the Superior Court dismissed the government's lawsuit against CUC after the parties reached a settlement agreement. According to the settlement, the government paid CUC $47.8 million in a five-month period in 2006.

It was only in the first week of September that CUC cancelled the load shedding schedule. But the bad news was that CUC implemented the then highest ever electric fuel rate at 22.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

The crisis at CUC was compounded by the end of September when more than 20 nonresident workers plus six engineers stopped working as no bill has been signed allowing the utility agency to keep employing alien workers. CUC crew had a hard time fixing the power big engines at Power Plant 1 as businessman Felipe Atalig rejected CUC's call to let his longtime alien workers help fix the engine problem. The repairs lasted for about a week.

In the first month of October, Public Law 15-94 took effect, putting a cap at 17.6 cents per kilowatt-hour for residential customers. CUC warned that they would implement more load shedding again as a result of the Legislature's action to lower residential power rates.

But in the second week of November or after the elections, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial signed emergency regulations that amended the utility's electric fuel rates for residential customers. As a result, electric fuel rates became even higher than the regulations that took effect in July 2006.

The Christmas month opened its first week with islandwide outages after trees hit an electrical grid. In the mid-December, rotating outages affected most areas on the island for many hours due to another engine problem at Power Plant 1.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day saw only a minor outage. People have been learning to conserve electric energy as the fuel rates remain high at 25.8 cents per kilowatt-hour.

As to when the next rotating blackout or islandwide outages will occur, it still is anybody's guess.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Tracking campaign cash

To whom will the next president be most indebted for helping to finance his or her campaign? The most accurate answer is that it is almost impossible to know. This election could end up being the first to be financed entirely with private money, if the eventual nominees choose not to take public financing. Even now, before the fourth-quarter fundraising totals come in, the presidential candidates have raised a combined $420 million. But the identities of the well-connected fundraisers who have helped haul in these big bundles, and the amounts they have brought in, remain far from clear.

Candidates are not required to reveal the identities of "bundlers"—people who collect contributions from many individuals—and disclosure records range from inadequate to spotty to nonexistent. The best, but still inadequate, disclosure comes from Democrats Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, who have provided the identities of their big bundlers and the amounts but only within broad ranges. Clinton, for instance, lists 311 "Hillraisers" who have brought in at least $100,000 each—but with no indication of how much each is responsible for. Obama is slightly more specific; he lists "bundlers" within the ranges of $50,000 to $100,000; $100,000 to $200,000; and $200,000 and up. Just how much information that leaves out was made clear earlier this year when the Clinton campaign returned the $850,000 that had been brought in by disgraced—now indicted—businessman Norman Hsu.

Despite the inadequacy of the data, the Campaign Finance Institute and Public Citizen recently teamed up to analyze the major industries represented by the bundlers. The study found that more than half of the bundlers came from three segments of the economy: law (608 bundlers); finance (336 bundlers, from securities and investment firms, banks, and other finance-related entities); and real estate (190 bundlers.) The financial importance of lawyers may be overstated, because most of the lawyer-bundlers (327 of the 608) were helping Democratic former trial lawyer John Edwards and because Edwards has chosen to list all his bundlers, no matter how much they have raised for him.

The real solution, contained in a bill recently introduced in Congress and sponsored by all four Democratic senators running for president, would be to require the disclosure of presidential bundlers. The chief goal of this important measure is to overhaul the obsolete system of providing public financing for presidential campaigns. As part of that larger change, however, the bill would require campaigns to disclose the identities and amounts of all individuals or groups that bundle contributions totaling more than $50,000 in the four-year election cycle.

As the current presidential campaign demonstrated even before 2008, this disclosure is critical. The existing system limits individuals to writing $2,300 checks, out of concern that they will wield undue influence, while it allows them to collect six- and even seven-figure sums for their favored candidates. It is dangerous to have all this take place outside public view, with candidates revealing only as much information as they choose.

(c) 2007, The Washington Post

Working on the railroad

Labor Abuse

I and a few hundred other people were at the Labor Department Processing Office last week standing in interminable lines. The reasons for the lengthy wait for service are twofold:

First, there are lots of contract workers trying to get in under the deadline to be consensually or otherwise transferred before the new labor regulations come into effect on Jan. 1st. 2008. Many hundreds of them, perhaps a couple of thousand have come forward in the past few weeks to beat that deadline, after which they cannot transfer without an administrative order and some serious hoop jumping.

Second, a couple of months ago Labor Department management decided to reallocate manpower to reduce the then large backlog of labor processing applications. Because of a lack of funds and a lack of manpower it was decided to split the workday into mornings during which Labor Department employees work on clearing the backlog of applications and afternoons when the service windows open up allowing new applications and other business to be transacted.

The second of these reasons brings us around to the subject of this article, labor abuse. The ones being abused here are the Labor Department employees. They are required to come to work at the regular time early in the morning and work for half a day on the paperwork backlog mentioned above. Then after a lunch break they are tasked to come back to work and do another entire day's work of accepting and verifying new applications and all other window service tasks but have only the afternoon hours to accomplish it. In other words they must do another whole day's work in half a day.

The right way to clear this big backlog might be to hire temporary manpower to do the grunt work. Ten or 15 data entry and filing clerks could do the drudgery while a couple of knowledgeable Labor Department employees could oversee and check their work. Another possibility would be to allow overtime for the entire staff, say 2 to 4 hours per day until the backlog is cleared. I'm sure management thought about these solutions and said "nice options but where do we get the money to pay the salaries or the overtime?"

So what it all boils down to is a group of hard pressed individuals down there in Processing are working double time and regular hours "overtime" without benefit of being paid for the extra work. I've been there transacting applications two or three times in the last couple of months and saw these folks gamely trying to keep up with this pace and doing so with a great deal of skill and with smiles on their faces. The other sections like JVA and Records and Enforcement and Hearings are also in for a lot of extra work in the coming months as new labor regulations go into effect and contract workers shuffle to try to stay here in the CNMI.

Labor Department employees' jobs are not likely to become easier in the coming months, and the workload will probably increase instead of decrease. Add to this the looming possibility that a federal takeover of Labor and Immigration may be imposed by the U.S., causing some or all of them to lose their jobs altogether. Both are tough on morale.

I for one am amazed at the show of good spirit shown by these hard working individuals and I salute them for their diligent efforts. If the workload without overtime doesn't ease up soon maybe they should walk across the hallway and file a labor case. (Kidding there).

■■■

Omnibus Railroad

If you are watching right now you can see from current events how the U.S. system of government works. Lobbyists and other paid special interest groups suggest a course of action. Some of these special interests are from inside the government, others come from outside. Closed-door inner sanctum committee meetings are held where other insider special interest government groups, committees, staffers and others draft the legislation, often with a self-interest agenda to push or a chip on their shoulder to avenge. Bills are then packaged together, dozens sometimes, seldom if ever read by lawmakers, claimed by their sponsors to be uncontested then passed while most members are back in their home states diddling the wife and vacationing on the taxpayers dime. Four senators and a sticky dress aide are often enough to get the legislation passed.

In our case they disguise a federal takeover of the CNMI as a tree hugger/feel good package of "uncontested" environmental measures. Seriously, the bill designed to terminate self-government in the Marianas is hidden inside a package called the National Parks, Forests, Parks, Public Land and Reclamation Act of 2007. Does that sound like a federal takeover bill to you? Want to guess how many U.S. senators will actually read even part of even one of the "nearly 60" bills packaged inside S.2483? My guess is zero. Want to guess how many even realize they will be voting on a measure to nullify government autonomy in the CNMI? I wonder who else is being screwed to the wall by other bills hidden in this "uncontested

See WORKING on Next Page

Sour Grapes

By BRUCE BATEMAN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Bruce A. Bateman writes Sour Grapes when the moon is full and the mood strikes. Stay tuned for each exciting episode. "Yes, he is opinionated." Email: bbateman@pticom.com; Blog: http://saipanuvian.blogspot.com/

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Five tips for decoding those election polls

By GARY LANGER AND JON COHEN
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WASHINGTON—As the 2008 campaign roars into Iowa and New Hampshire, anyone following the polls is probably finding it increasingly difficult to separate signal from noise. So here's a brief user's guide to the coming bounty of data.

1) Throttle back on the horse race.

Sure, keeping track of the score is fun. But like caramel-coated popcorn, it's addictive rather than truly nourishing. Odd as this advice may sound coming from two pollsters, ease up. Polls are better used not merely to tell us who's winning but why.

What issues motivate voters? Which policy proposals and candidate characteristics seize their imaginations? What are the key divisions among groups of voters? By answering these questions, good polls help us see the underlying dynamics of the election—not just the bare numbers but citizens' real concerns.

The horse race is not just less substantive, it's also not predictive. Plenty of likely voters in Iowa, New Hampshire and elsewhere are still reserving the right to change their minds. And polls have real limits here: The who's-up, who's-down numbers are imperfect estimates, often prone to more volatility than just about anything else we measure.

Why? For one thing, there's the interplay of voters' changing minds and campaigns' tactics. For another, even high-quality polls use different models to work out who's a "likely" voter. Widely varied estimates of the number of "undecided" voters are more often a function of polling techniques than of true indecision. And focusing on the gap between candidates, rather than on each one's level of support, is a sure way to exaggerate small differences in polls.

If you really need to sweat out whether Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton is at 28 percent or 34 percent in Iowa (where there'll be fewer caucusgoers than there are seats at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway), have at it. Personally, we'd rather know whether voters' top priority is change or experience, how the economy stacks up as an issue or how religion is shaping the Republican race. Some polls, sadly, don't even bother to ask.

2) Consider the source.

Polls too often get a bye on journalism's central tenet: Consider the source. Anything else that flies in over the transom gets checked out before we accept it as real, but numbers are often somehow too compelling. They elevate anecdote; they lend authority and credibility to what's otherwise anybody's guess. We need 'em. We want 'em. And we run with 'em—all too often without stopping to check.

In reality, there are good polls and bad, reliable methods and unreliable ones. To meet reasonable news standards, a poll should be based on a representative, random sample of respondents; "probability sampling" is a fundamental requirement of inferential statistics, the foundation on which survey research is built. Surrender to "convenience" or self-selected samples of the sort that so many people click on the Internet, and you're quickly afloat in a sea of voodoo data.

Probability sampling has its own challenges, of course. Many telephone surveys are conducted using techniques that range from the minimally acceptable to the dreadful. When it's all just numbers, these, too, get tossed into the mix, like turpentine in the salad dressing.

A few guidelines: Publicly released partisan polls consistently overstate their side's support; steer clear. Polls churned out like so many assembly-line widgets often lack the rigor that reliable research demands. Be wary of automated "robo-polls" and unrepresentative Internet click-ins. Look for telephone surveys produced by known and credible sources that offer a detailed disclosure of their methodology, questionnaires and results.

If you have the time to drill down, do. Look for biased questions and cherry-picked or hyped analyses. Watch for big headlines about small differences and reckless analysis of small subgroups.

3) Watch for consistent change and a meaningful narrative.

Change over time is important, especially when it's consistent, with a clear narrative of what's happening and why. Knowing, say, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee's current level of support in Iowa is woefully incomplete without also knowing its trajectory over time—from 8 percent in our July poll to 24 percent in November to 35 percent in December.

"Trend is your friend," pollsters say. Look at repeat polls from the same organization to gauge movement over time. And, again, look beyond the horse race to other measures: the levels of commitment and enthusiasm from a candidate's supporters, the groups that are more or less fired up, the factors motivating their support. It takes willpower to trudge off to an hours-long Iowa caucus on a dark winter's night. Who's inspired? How? Why?

Look at preferences on the issues; examine views of candidates' various attributes; consider differences among voter groups. The evolution of these views puts the story in context—elevating mere numbers into something of greater value. Let's call it intelligence.

4) Don't be seduced by averages.

Poll averages are all the rage this year, even ones that purport to show candidates' standings measured down to tenths of a percentage point. (Don't get us started.) This may fill political junkies' seemingly insatiable desire for a minute-by-minute assessment, as if this were the Nasdaq average or our rich Uncle Leo's EKG. In fact, there's a lot less to these averages than meets the eye.

Averaging across polls with different methodologies can easily obscure rather than clarify. If you take a state with few polls—one good-quality survey, say, and three methodological clunkers—averaging may well do more harm than good. Averaging polls done across different time periods, with different sampling methodologies, different procedures to estimate "likely voters" (some reasonable, some not) and different numbers of alleged "undecideds" all assumes that these differences make no difference. With this approach, you might as well throw a little Ouija in as well.

The reality is that a good poll is a good estimate. All else being equal (and it never is), a collection of good polls will be an even better estimate, but a collection of good and bad polls won't.

5) Be skeptical of post-election scorecards.

As surely as night follows day, you can bet that some lucky pollster will spring up after each caucus or primary with a chest-beating announcement about how his or her estimate was the most accurate. Chill. Good technique matters, but post-election assertions that this or that poll was the "most accurate" are, by and large, hokum. Polls tend to converge as Election Day approaches, but their paths to the endpoint vary dramatically. Some pollsters weight their data to previous turnout, some build in high numbers of undecideds and then arbitrarily allocate them to one side or another, others do Lord-knows-what. Sometimes it works, and a career is born.

At the end of the day, we're on solid ground judging polls by their inputs, not their outputs; a lucky guess is not the same thing as a high-quality survey. It takes rigorous, proven sampling methods, well-crafted questions and intelligent analysis to produce a valid, reliable and meaningful understanding of an election. A good estimate will bring us within a few points of the final outcome, but pinpoint accuracy in pre-election polling is a myth. And for a few of us, at least, the aim of the enterprise is not simply to win the horse-race lottery.

One last suggestion: Relax, unless you're one of the candidates. We'll know what the voters decided soon enough—and, with the help of good polling, we'll even know why.

Gary Langer is director of polling at ABC News. Jon Cohen is director of polling at The Washington Post.

Global warming's tipping point

By BILL MCKIBBEN
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

This month may have been the most important yet in the two-decade history of the fight against global warming. Al Gore got his Nobel in Stockholm; international negotiators made real progress on a treaty in Bali; and in Washington, Congress actually worked up the nerve to raise gas mileage standards for cars.

But what may turn out to be the most crucial development went largely unnoticed. It happened at an academic conclave in San Francisco. A NASA scientist named James Hansen offered a simple, straightforward and mind-blowing bottom line for the planet: 350, as in parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It's a number that may make what happened in Washington and Bali seem quaint and nearly irrelevant. It's the number that may define our future.

To understand what it means, you need a little background.

Twenty years ago, Hansen kicked off this issue by testifying before Congress that the planet was warming and that people were the cause. At the time, we could only guess how much warming it would take to put us in real danger. Since the pre-Industrial Revolution concentration of carbon in the atmosphere was roughly 275 parts per million, scientists and policymakers focused on what would happen if that number doubled—550 was a crude and mythical red line, but politicians and economists set about trying to see if we could stop short of that point. The answer was: not easily, but it could be done.

In the past five years, though, scientists began to worry that the planet was reacting more quickly than they had expected to the relatively small temperature increases we've already seen. The rapid melt of most glacial systems, for instance, convinced many that 450 parts per million was a more prudent target. That's what the European Union and many of the big environmental groups have been proposing in recent years, and the economic modeling makes clear that achieving it is still possible, though the chances diminish with every new coal-fired power plant.

But the data just keep getting worse. The news this fall that Arctic sea ice was melting at an off-the-charts pace and data from Greenland suggesting that its giant ice sheet was starting to slide into the ocean make even 450 look too high. Consider: We're already at 383 parts per million, and it's knocking the planet off kilter in substantial ways. So, what does that mean?

It means, Hansen says, that we've gone too far. "The evidence indicates we've aimed too high—that the safe upper limit for atmospheric CO2 is no more than 350 ppm," he said after his presentation. Hansen has reams of paleo-climatic data to support his statements (as do other scientists who presented papers at the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco this month). The last time the Earth warmed two or three degrees Celsius—which is what 450 parts per million implies—sea levels rose by tens of meters, something that would shake the foundations of the human enterprise should it happen again.

And we're already past 350. Does that mean we're doomed? Not quite. Not any more than your doctor telling you that your cholesterol is way too high means the game is over. Much like the way your body will thin its blood if you give up cheese fries, so the Earth naturally gets rid of some of its CO2 each year. We just need to stop putting more in and, over time, the number will fall, perhaps fast enough to avert the worst damage.

That "just," of course, hides the biggest political and economic task we've ever faced: weaning ourselves from coal, gas and oil. The difference between 550 and 350 is that the weaning has to happen now, and everywhere. No more passing the buck. The gentle measures bandied about at Bali, themselves way too much for the Bush administration, don't come close. Hansen called for an immediate ban on new coal-fired power plants that don't capture carbon, the phaseout of old coal-fired generators, and a tax on carbon high enough to make sure that we leave tar sands and oil shale in the ground. To use the medical analogy, we're not talking statins to drop your cholesterol; we're talking huge changes in every aspect of your daily life.

Maybe too huge. The problems of global equity alone may be too much—the Chinese aren't going to stop burning coal unless we give them some other way to pull people out of poverty. And we simply may have waited too long.

But at least we're homing in on the right number. Three hundred and fifty is the number every person needs to know.

Bill McKibben is a scholar in residence in environmental studies at Middlebury College and the author of the forthcoming Bill McKibben Reader.

WORKING

From Page 10

omnibus" package?

This is sadly, not an unusual strategy. Committee chairman Sen. Bingaman is "delighted" and hopes for speedy passage of the unread bills. I bet he is. I wonder what his cut will be?

So American History and Civics teachers take note. If you are still giving kids in your government school classes the party line egalitarian, citizen-representative, bills passed on their merits story; you are doing them a huge disservice. Tell them how the system really works. Wake them up to reality. The system touted as a measure to facilitate flow of legislation is really a system of pat-my-back-I'll-pat-yours patronage where US Senate and Congressional votes are traded like cattle at auction to the highest bidder. Nothing new there, it just happens to be affecting us directly this time.

■■■

Quotes of the week: A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad.

—Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)

The history of an oppressed people is hidden in the lies and the agreed myth of its conquerors.

—Meridel Le Sueur (1900-1996)

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲81° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°	▲83° ▼75°	▲82° ▼76°	▲83° ▼76°

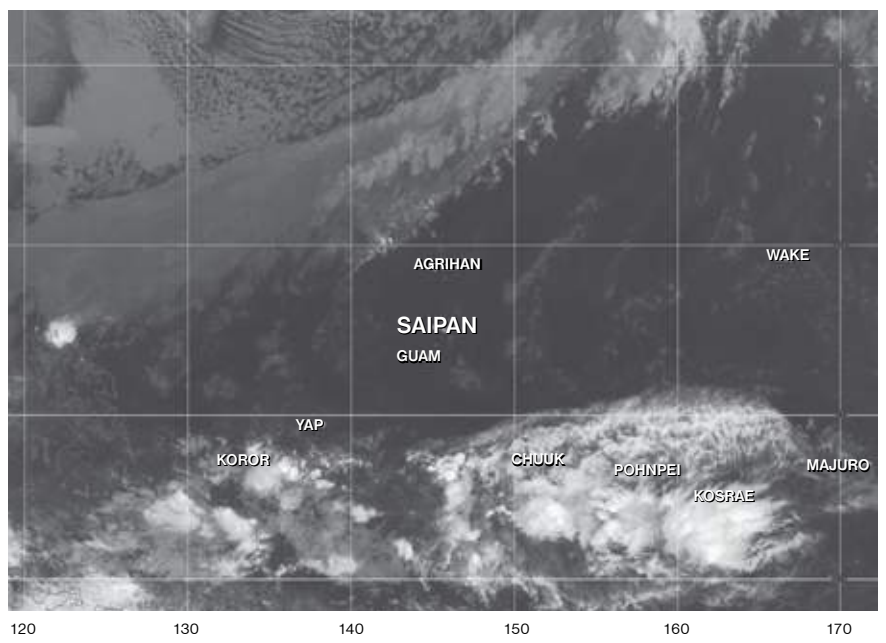
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	▲84	▼76
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲88	▼77
Yap	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼77
Chuuk	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼80
Pohnpei	Sunny	▲86	▼77
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲89	▼78
Majuro	Partly Sunny	▲84	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Mostly Sunny	▲73	▼61
Beijing	Sunny	▲36	▼21
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	▲66	▼55
Honolulu	Showers	▲77	▼70
London	Showers	▲46	▼42
Los Angeles	Partly Sunny	▲69	▼46
Manila	Showers	▲84	▼73
Melbourne	Sunny	▲92	▼67
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲79	▼51
New York	Rain/Snow	▲44	▼28
Osaka	Cloudy	▲39	▼30
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	▲38	▼35
Pusan	Partly Sunny	▲38	▼26
Rome	Cloudy	▲46	▼39
Salem	Mostly Cloudy	▲41	▼33
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲58	▼45
Seoul	Partly Sunny	▲27	▼18
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲48	▼36
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	▲46	▼29

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, DEC. 31, 2007
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A stationary front extends northeastward from 16N130E to 20N140E then continues as a cold front through 25N149E. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are occurring along and up to 500 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough stretches southeastward from 10N130E through a weak circulation centered west of Koror at 7N133E to end at EQ142E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found from 130E to 140E between the equator and 8N. An upper-level trough reaches northeastward from 10N145E to 22N165E. Divergent upper-level winds to the south of the trough are combining with convergent trade winds to cause scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms in a broad area from 144E to 167E between 1N and 7N. This area includes Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
02:03AM Today	High Tide:	1.3 Feet
07:24AM Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
01:52PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
09:22PM Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43AM	5:57PM
Wednesday	6:43AM	5:58PM
Thursday	6:44AM	5:59PM
Friday	6:44AM	5:59PM
Saturday	6:44AM	6:00PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	12:29AM	12:26AM
Wednesday	01:16AM	01:02PM
Thursday	02:04AM	01:40PM
Friday	02:54AM	02:22PM
Saturday	03:47AM	03:07PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 25, 2007

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Guam

CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	1,2,4,5,6,7
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7

Guam-Manila

CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7

Saipan-Manila

CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078	8:30am	11:10am	Daily

Guam-Nagoya

CO 971	7:45am	10:30am	1,2,4,5,6,7
NW 023	4:15pm	7:05pm	Daily
CO 904	4:35pm	7:25pm	Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078	8:30am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily

Guam-Narita

JO 982	4:15am	7:00am	Daily
CO 961	7:20am	9:55am	Daily
CO 006	1:00pm	3:45pm	Daily
JO 942	3:30pm	6:15pm	Daily
NW 081	3:55pm	6:50pm	Daily
NW 073	4:15pm	7:00pm	Daily
CO 963	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083	4:30pm	7:15pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Guam-Hongkong

CO 910	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5

Saipan-Guanzhou

CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7

Rota-Guam

CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

ARRIVALS

Guam-Saipan

CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,4,5,6,7
CO 9316	3:30am	4:20am	2
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	2,3,4,5,6,7

Seoul-Saipan

OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	10:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
OZ 607	6:50pm	2:50am+1	3,7 via Busan
OZ 607	7:30pm	2:50am+1	4 via Busan

Busan-Saipan

OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7

Manila-Guam

CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Manila-Saipan

CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3

Nagoya-Saipan

NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily

Nagoya-Guam

NW 024	10:00am	2:40pm	Daily
CO 970	11:30am	4:00pm	Daily
CO 905	8:25pm	12:50am+1	1,3,4,5,6,7

Narita-Saipan

NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya

Narita-Guam

JO 941	9:30am	2:05pm	Daily
NW 074	9:45am	2:25pm	Daily
CO 962	11:05am	3:35pm	Daily
CO 007	5:15pm	9:50pm	Daily
NW 082	8:30pm	1:15am+1	Daily
CO 964	8:40pm	1:15am+1	Daily
JO 981	9:30pm	2:05am+1	Daily

Osaka-Saipan

NW 084	10:40am	3:20pm	1,2,3,5,6,7

Hongkong-Guam

CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5

Guanzhou-Saipan

CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5

Rota-Saipan

CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6

Guam-Rota

CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

(Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana. ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

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  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
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- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
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Business

SMALL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Lisa P. Sablan

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
EDITOR

Every Year, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and the Guam Chamber of Commerce come out with their respective Business Person of the Year awards, while the First Hawaiian Bank and *Guam Business* have their annual Businesswoman of the Year Maga'haga Award. These lists are illustrious indeed, littered with the names of the islands' movers and shakers, of captains of the industry. Recipients of these awards are truly deserving of these recognitions and their merits are undisputed.

However, we at the *Saipan Tribune* feel that there is a need for still another recognition, this time focusing on small businesses, which are a vital component of what makes any economy strong and make up most of the cogs and wheels that keep any nation's economy running smoothly. Small businesses are the backbone of the CNMI economy, built on the entrepreneurial spirit and can-do attitude of its people. The *Saipan Tribune*'s Small Business Person of the Year award seeks to honor that entrepreneurial spirit, so essential to the economic development of any community.

Ranging from self-employed individuals with no payrolls, to mom-and-pop stores and family-run companies, small businesses are where we buy our vegetables and snacks, get our hair cut, get our portraits taken, have our computers fixed and all such small services that we inevitably ignore but have come to depend on.

In this inaugural edition of the Small Business Person of the Year award, the *Saipan Tribune* recognizes Sablan Topline Cleaning Agency and its owner, Lisa Pangelinan Sablan, who shepherded the company from a small startup less than 10 years ago to where it is now, the leading and most successful commercial cleaning service firm in the Commonwealth.

With just a little over a hundred employees and contracts with private and public clients, including the Commonwealth Health Center, Fiesta Resort and Spa, and Hyatt Regency Saipan, Sablan Topline has evolved into a model small business, providing cleaning services that are particularly important for a tourist destination like the CNMI.

Juan S. Tenorio, former chairman of the Commonwealth Development Authority, recounts that when he and Lisa Sablan first sat down to discuss business opportunities in the CNMI, she instantly grasped the business concept and the demand for a commercial cleaning service firm. "It was clear from the start that Ms. Sablan was going to make a go of this business. She is dependable and has good business sense—all important to a successful long-term business. And she is tireless, which explains… her success in this unlikely field," he said.

Her success is particularly noteworthy in that, not only has she had no prior experience in this line of work, but she managed to grow the company at a time when the CNMI economy is facing one of its toughest periods ever. "It is a difficult task to manage 120 employees in off-hour work, producing the same quality of work each day, 365 days a year. There are no holidays in this business! Imagine the discipline that goes into providing a clean business environment throughout the year, year after year," Tenorio said.

At the same time, a lot goes into cleaning than one might think. "It is tedious and must be consistently performed each time," Tenorio said. There are security, sanitation, and safety standards that must be met. Business owners expect that the next day, when their doors open for business, the premises is clean, that products used are safe and properly disposed of, and nothing is broken or pilfered from the premises."

Sablan's clients are obviously pleased with the quality of her work. Hyatt Regency's Human Resources director, Josephine Mesta, has nothing but praises for Sablan Topline. "Our relationship with Ms. Sablan as a contractor for manpower services in our Stewarding, Housekeeping and Laundry department has been a very successful partnership," she said.

Mesta recalled that Sablan first convinced Hyatt in the early part of 2000 that she can provide the required manpower at reasonable cost, and less administrative issues. Starting with one department at a time, "she proved that she was able to save us money as well as administrative and personnel costs associated with direct hiring." By 2003, Sablan Topline was supplying manpower to Hyatt's overhead departments and was able to maintain the expected standards of the hotel.

"Ms. Sablan's ability to sustain her business in such trying economic times is admirable. The morale of the employees she places with Hyatt is an indication that she treats her employees well," said Mesta.

Marylou S. Ada, the former CDA executive director, said that it is not only Sablan's success as a businessperson that sets her apart but also her generous heart and compassionate spirit. "Despite the hard times, Lisa doesn't want to let any of her employees go. She feels compassion for them because these people have families who will also be affected. That's what drives her to seek more business for her company, to ensure that she will have jobs for these employees." Ada testifies that Sablan Topline has one of the lowest turnover rates, its employees loyal and committed to working for the company.

That compassionate spirit is what is also behind the many charitable causes that Sablan supports. She regularly donates to the Make A Wish Foundation, Marianas March Against Cancer and other island charities.

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According to Bishop Tomas A. Camacho, Sablan Topline has also been providing free cleaning services to the Mount Carmel Cathedral every Saturday for more than 10 years now. "I have personally known Ms. Sablan to be a generous and service-oriented businesswoman who always look after the good of the community. …On special occasions, the staff of Sablan Topline has always been instrumental in the preparation and cleaning of the church."

Sablan, however, is not one to trumpet these things. She shuns the spotlight and chooses to work behind the scenes. In one instance, the *Saipan Tribune* published a story of a Tinian mother whose son was stranded in Hawaii for weeks after he failed to make it to the U.S. military. On the day the story came out, the mother received a phone call with an offer to provide the ticket for her son—on the condition that the donor remain anonymous. It was only much, much later that the mother revealed that the generous donor was actually Sablan.

Sablan's children said as much. "She is far from being a woman who enjoys being the center of attention. She actually shuns the spotlight whenever she can. In reality, she is quite humble and shy. It is common knowledge that she would much rather help out with her friends and family in the Chenchulu group, a civic minded group of people who have taken it upon themselves to carry out charitable work throughout the island," said her children (Frankie and Agnes, Joseph Jr. and Cora, Cathy and Frank, John and Pearl, and Antonia).

Sablan is no pushover, though. The sterling reputation that Sablan Topline has made for itself attests to the drive and the hard work that Sablan has put into making the company the most successful in this line of business. Risking her own money, time, and resources to make the business idea work, Sablan has risen to the challenge and has made Sablan Topline the gold standard for other commercial cleaning companies on the island and for this, she is this year's *Saipan Tribune* Small Business Person of the Year.

Nation

New Year's resolutions: Win Iowa, NH

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP)—A bit of bubbly, a few verses of Auld Lang Syne and candidates, candidates and more candidates.

It's New Year's Eve in Iowa and New Hampshire.

With the caucuses and primary just days away, many presidential hopefuls are spending every precious minute campaigning—even if it's while voters and the rest of the world ring in the New Year with celebrations, not politics, on their mind. The Democratic and Republican contests in Iowa, on Thursday, and New Hampshire, on Jan. 8, are essentially dead heats.

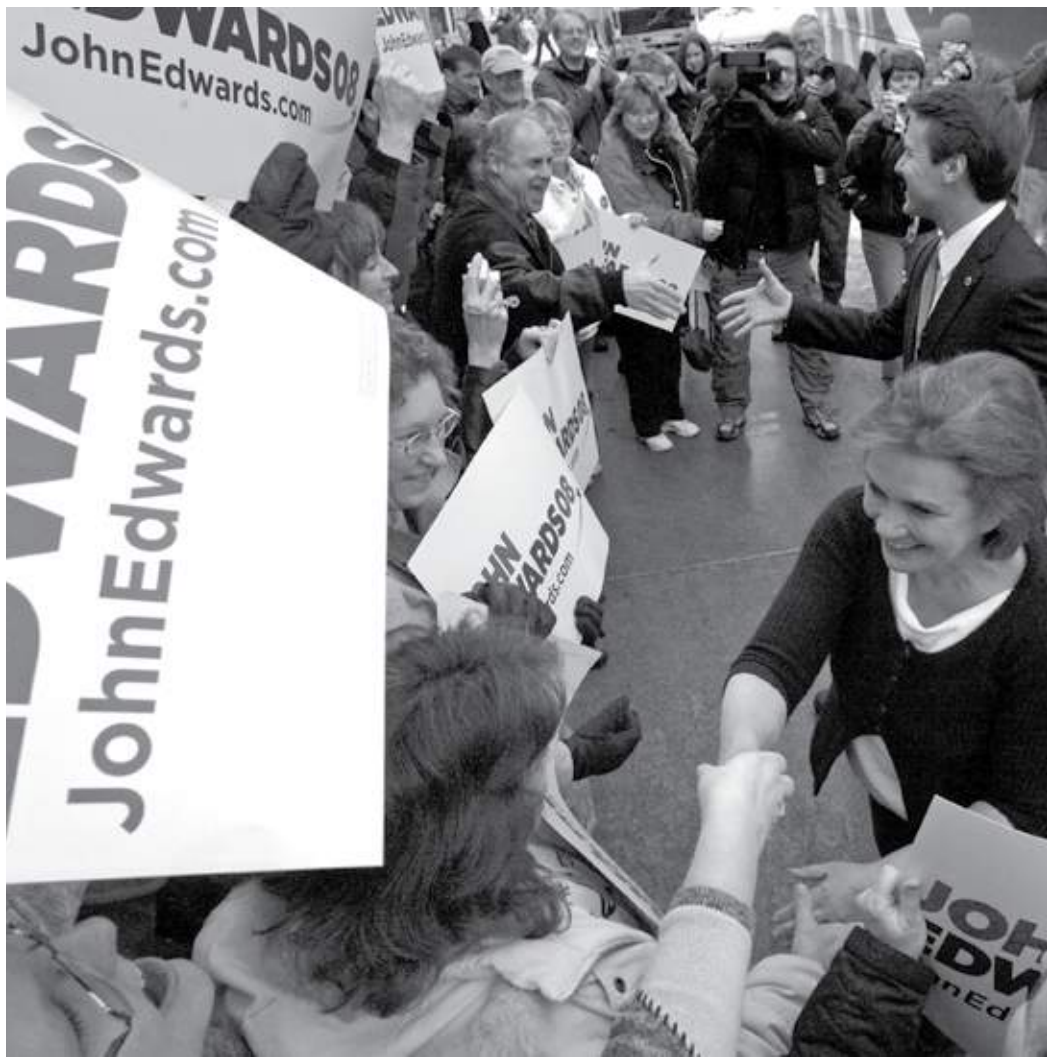
No candidate can afford to take time off, except perhaps for a sip of champagne.

The Clintons—Hillary and Bill—each will attend two events in Iowa then meet for a "New Year, New Beginnings Celebration" in Des Moines.

Among the other Democratic candidates, John Edwards planned to celebrate with staff, supporters and undecided caucus-goers at his campaign offices in Mason City, Iowa. Likewise, Barack Obama will wrap a long day of campaigning at an evening rally in Ames, Iowa.

Bill Richardson planned to join volunteers and supporters at a party featuring three local bands at a hotel in Des Moines, where he will lead the countdown to midnight and offer a New Year's toast.

"Our goal is to have a little fun and charge up and energize supporters for the mad dash to caucus night," said Richardson spokesman Tom Reynolds.



AP

Democratic presidential hopeful former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, top right, and his wife Elizabeth Edwards, center right, greet supporters before a rally in Boone, Iowa, Sunday, Dec. 30, 2007.

LA gang F13 accused of targeting blacks

LOS ANGELES (AP)—In a murderous quest aimed at "cleansing" their turf of snitches and rival gangsters, members of one of Los Angeles County's most vicious Latino gangs sometimes killed people just because of their race, an investigation found.

There were even instances in which Florencia 13 leaders ordered killings of black gangsters and then, when the intended victim couldn't be located, said "Well, shoot any black you see," Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca said.

"In certain cases some murders were just purely motivated on killing a black person," Baca said.

Authorities say there were 20 murders among more than 80 shootings documented during the gang's rampage in the hard-scrabble Florence-Firestone neighborhood, exceptional even in an area where gang violence has been commonplace for decades. They don't specify the time frame or how many of the killings were racial.

Los Angeles has struggled with gang violence for years, especially during the wars in the late 1980s and early '90s between the Crips and the Bloods—both black gangs. Latino gangs have gained influence since then as the Hispanic population surged.

Internet opens elite colleges to the world

By JUSTIN POPE
AP EDUCATION WRITER

BOSTON (AP)—Gilbert Strang is a quiet man with a rare talent: helping others understand linear algebra. He has written a half-dozen popular college textbooks, and for years a few hundred students at the elite Massachusetts Institute of Technology have been privileged to take his course.

Recently, with the growth of computer science, demand to understand linear algebra has surged. But so has the number of students Strang can teach.

An MIT initiative called "OpenCourseWare" makes virtually all the school's courses available online for free—lecture notes, readings, tests and often video lectures. Strang's Math 18.06 course is among the most popular, with visitors downloading his lectures more than 1.3 million times since June alone.

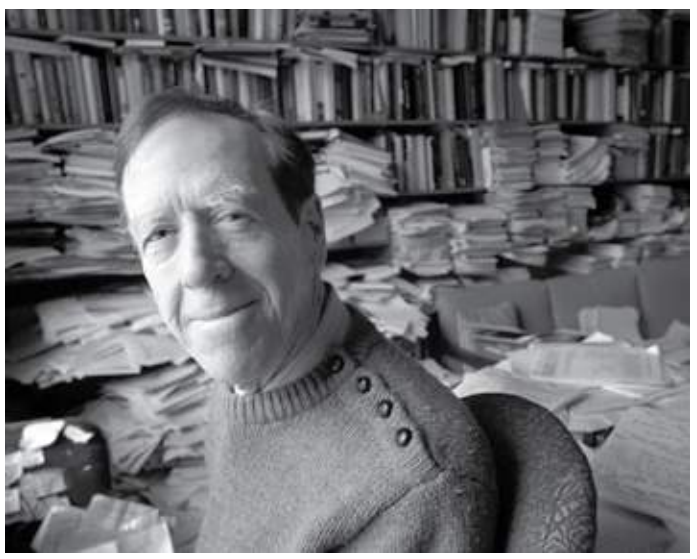
Strang's classroom is the world.

In his Istanbul dormitory, Kemal Burcak Kaplan, an undergraduate at Bogazici University, downloads Strang's lectures to try to boost his grade in a class there. Outside Calcutta, graduate student Sriram Chandrasekaran uses them to brush up on matrices for his engineering courses at the elite Indian Institute of Technology.

Many "students" are college teachers themselves, like Sheraz ali Khan at a small engineering institute in Peshawar, Pakistan, and Noorali Jiwaji, at the Open University of Tanzania. They use Strang and other MIT professors as guides in designing their own classes, and direct students to MIT's courses for help.

Others are closer to MIT's Cambridge, Massachusetts, campus. Some are MIT students and alumni, while others have no connection at all—like Gus Whelan, a retiree on nearby Cape Cod, and Dustin Darcy, a 27-year-old video game programmer in Los Angeles who uses linear algebra regularly in his work.

ON THE NET
http://ocw.mit.edu



AP

Massachusetts Institute of Technology mathematics professor Gilbert Strang appears in his office on the campus of MIT, in Cambridge, Mass., Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007.

"Rather than going through my old, dusty books," Darcy said, "I thought I might as well go through it from the top and see if I learn something new."

There has never been a more exciting time for the intellectually curious.

The world's top universities have come late to the world of online education, but they are arriving at last, creating an all-you-can eat online buffet of information.

And mostly, they are giving it away.

MIT's initiative is the largest, but the trend is spreading. More than 100 universities worldwide, including Johns Hopkins, Tufts and Notre Dame, have joined MIT in a consortium of schools promoting their own open courseware. You no longer need a Princeton ID to hear the prominent guests who speak regularly on campus, just an Internet connection. This month, Yale announced it would make material from seven popular courses available online, with 30 more to follow.

As with many technology trends, new services and platforms are driving change. Last spring marked the debut of "iTunes U," a section of Apple's popular music and video downloading service now publicly hosting free material from 28 colleges. Meanwhile, the University of California, Berkeley recently announced it would be the first to make full course lectures available on YouTube. Berkeley was already posting lectures, but YouTube has dramatically expanded their reach.

If there is not yet something for everyone, it is only a matter of time. On iTunes, popular recent downloads include a climate change panel at Stanford, lectures on existentialism by Cal-Berkeley professor Hubert Dreyfus, and a performance of Mozart's requiem by the Duke Chapel Choir. Berkeley's offerings include 48 classes, from "Engineering Thermodynamics" to "Human Emotion."

"It's almost as good as being there," said Whelan, the Massachusetts retiree, of the MIT classes he has sampled. "The only thing that's lacking is the pressure." He says he usually doesn't do the homework assignments, but adds: "Now that I'm not in school I don't have to do that anymore."

YouTube, iTunes, OpenCourseWare—none are the full college experience. You cannot raise your hand and ask a question. You cannot get a letter of recommendation.

ACROSS THE NATION

Trucker drives off San Diego-area pier

NATIONAL CITY, Calif. (AP)—A trucker hauling a load of Volkswagen cars drove his cab and several cars into San Diego Bay after blacking out at a marine terminal, authorities said. The unidentified driver suffered some kind of medical emergency and drove off a pier at the terminal Saturday afternoon, said fire department Capt. Sergio Mora. Mora said the driver—believed to be in his 40s—regained consciousness underwater and swam about 13 feet to the surface, where dock workers helped him out of the water. He was taken to a hospital in good condition.

Search helicopter crash kills 3 in Ala.

TUSCUMBIA, Ala. (AP)—A helicopter crashed in thick woods early Sunday during the search for a missing hunter, killing all three people on board, according to the company that owns the aircraft. The cause of the crash was under investigation, said Jeff Davis, a manager of Air Evac EMS, based in West Plains, Mo. The helicopter crew had spotted the hunter and the crash occurred as the aircraft was hovering over his location, said Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Warren Woodberry. The hunter was recovered, said Colbert County Sheriff Ronnie May. The hunter was taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries that were not life threatening, May said.

Atlanta may dodge drought record

ATLANTA (AP)—Rain fell in the city for a fourth consecutive day Sunday and meteorologists decided it probably would be enough to save 2007 from going down as the drought-stricken Atlanta area's driest year on record. The most arid year ever recorded for Atlanta was 1954, when only 31.80 inches of rain fell. Meteorologists had said it appeared that this year would have even less rain than that, saying rain falling Sunday morning would taper off and quit. However, showers continued and by 2:50 p.m. Sunday the 2007 cumulative rainfall was up to 31.56 inches—with a band of moderate rain moving in from Alabama.

Asia

World outsources pregnancies to India

ANAND, India (AP)—Every night in this quiet western Indian city, 15 pregnant women prepare for sleep in the spacious house they share, ascending the stairs in a procession of ballooned bellies, to bedrooms that become a landscape of soft hills.

A team of maids, cooks and doctors looks after the women, whose pregnancies would be unusual anywhere else but are common here. The young mothers of Anand, a place famous for its milk, are pregnant with the children of infertile couples from around the world.

The small clinic at Kaival Hospital matches infertile couples with local women, cares for the women during pregnancy and delivery, and counsels them afterward. Anand's surrogate mothers, pioneers in the growing field of outsourced pregnancies, have given birth to roughly 40 babies.

More than 50 women in this city are now pregnant with the children of couples from the United States, Taiwan, Britain and beyond. The women earn more than many would make in 15 years. But the program raises a host of uncomfortable questions that touch on morals and modern science, exploitation and globalization, and that most natural of desires: to have a family.

Dr. Nayna Patel, the woman behind Anand's baby boom, defends her work as meaningful for everyone involved.

"There is this one woman who desperately needs a baby and cannot have her own child without the help of a surrogate. And at the other end there is this woman who badly wants to help her (own) family," Patel said. "If this female wants to help the other one ... why not allow that? ... It's not for any bad cause. They're helping one another to have a new life in this world."

Experts say commercial surrogacy—or what has been called "wombs for rent"—is growing in India. While no reliable numbers track such pregnancies nationwide, doctors work with surrogates in virtually every major city.

ASIAN BRIEFS

2 bombers die in failed Pakistan attack

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Two suspected suicide bombers died Sunday when they prematurely detonated their bomb near the residence of a senior leader of the ruling party in eastern Pakistan, police said. The men were on a motorcycle and were not far away from the residence of Ijazul Haq, a senior leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q party, in the city of Bahawalnagar when their bomb exploded, said Zafar Abbas Bukhari, the district police chief. The blast was the first suicide attack in Pakistan since the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto on Thursday.

1 NATO soldier killed in bomb attack

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—A roadside bomb killed a NATO soldier and wounded four others in southern Afghanistan on Sunday, while a Taliban ambush left eight Afghan security personnel dead, officials said. The NATO soldiers were patrolling in the country's volatile south when an explosion ripped through their vehicle, NATO said in a statement. "They were immediately evacuated for medical care ... (but) sadly one died of wounds inflicted by the explosion," it said. NATO did not identify the nationalities of the dead and wounded soldiers, or the exact location of the blast.

Nepal's ex-rebels rejoin government

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP)—Former communist rebels rejoined Nepal's government on Sunday, ending a political crisis that began when the ex-guerrillas walked out of a ruling coalition three months ago. Five ex-rebels were appointed ministers by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala as part of an agreement to end the crisis, Chief Secretary Bhojraj Ghimire said. The five are to take an oath of office on Monday. Two of the ministers will hold considerable power by controlling all state-run media and local development, including city and village councils. The others will oversee forests, soil conservation, planning, women's issues and social welfare.

Philippine military: Operations have weakened rebels

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Communist guerrillas lost about 1,000 fighters in 2007 but continue to be a thorn in the side of the government by launching attacks against Philippine forces, a military report said Sunday. The number of New People's Army guerrillas dropped this year to slightly more than 6,000—the lowest level in 12 years. The insurgents were killed in battle, arrested, or surrendered, the report said. Thirteen rebel bases were also lost, leaving 87 strongholds nationwide, it said. The communist guerrillas have been waging a rural-based insurrection for a Marxist-led state for 39 years.

Bhutto's son, husband to succeed her

NAUDERO, Pakistan (AP)—Benazir Bhutto's 19-year-old son—a student with no political experience—was named symbolic leader of her party Sunday, while her husband took effective control, extending Pakistan's most enduring political dynasty.

The major parties appeared to agree that the elections should take place as scheduled on Jan. 8 despite street violence and political turmoil triggered by the assassination of Bhutto. The Election Commission is to discuss the timing of the polls Monday.

A successful vote would bolster U.S.-backed plans to restore democracy to the nuclear-armed country as it battles rising Islamic extremism.

Rioting subsided Sunday after destruction that left at least 44 dead and caused ten of millions of dollars in damage, but bitterness remained over the government's response to the gun and suicide attack that killed Bhutto.

The appointment of Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, was not without its own complications. A former Cabinet minister who spent eight years in prison on corruption accusations, he is known as "Mr. 10 Percent" for allegedly taking kickbacks and is viewed with suspicion by many Pakistanis.

AP

Bilawal Zardari, center, son of slain former prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto addresses a news conference with his father Asif Ali Zardari, left, and party president Amin Fahim after he has been nominated Chairman of Bhutto's People's party in Naudero near Larkana, Pakistan on Sunday, Dec. 30, 2007.

At a news conference on Sunday, Zardari said the opposition party—Pakistan's largest—had no confidence in the government's ability to bring the killers to justice and urged the United Nations to establish a committee like the one investigating the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

The decisions on the future of Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party were made at a closed-door meeting in the sprawling family estate in the south of the country where the two-time former prime minister grew up.

The eldest of Bhutto's three children, Bilawal Zardari, accepted the party's leadership, but said he would remain at Oxford University.

He said his father, who was officially designated co-chairman, would be the effective party leader.

Have a safe and peaceful New Year to all!
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World

2007 deadliest for US troops in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP)—The second half of 2007 saw violence drop dramatically in Iraq, but the progress came at a high price: The year was the deadliest for the U.S. military since the 2003 invasion, with 899 troops killed.

American commanders and diplomats, however, say the battlefield gains against insurgents such as al-Qaida in Iraq offer only a partial picture of where the country stands as the war moves toward its five-year mark in March.

Two critical shifts that boosted U.S.-led forces in 2007—a self-imposed cease-fire by a main Shiite militia and a grassroots Sunni revolt against extremists—could still unravel unless serious unity efforts are made by the Iraqi government.

Iran also remains a major wild card. U.S. officials believe the neighboring country has helped quiet Iraq by reducing its flow of suspected aid to Shiite fighters, including materials needed for deadly roadside bombs.

But Iran's apparent hands-off policies could come under strain as Shiite factions—some favoring Iran, others not—battle for control of Iraq's oil-rich south.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, will increasingly look to the uneven Iraqi security forces to carry the load in 2008 as demands for an American exit strategy grow sharper during the U.S. election year.

Britain, the main U.S. coalition partner in Iraq, is gradually drawing down its forces and other allies, including Poland and Australia, are contemplating full-scale withdrawals in the coming year.

"We're focusing our energy on building on what coalition and Iraqi troopers have accomplished in 2007," Gen. David Petraeus told a group of Western journalists on Saturday. "Success will not, however, be akin to flipping on a light switch. It will emerge slowly and fitfully, with reverses as well as advances, accumulating fewer bad days and gradually more good days."

That arc of progress played out in the raw statistics of U.S. and Iraqi casualties.

American military deaths peaked in May with 126 troops killed. It was then that the U.S. began ramping up its attacks against insurgent strongholds, leading to increased clashes in Baghdad and other key areas across central Iraq.

Seven months on, commanders and analysts say America's aggressive strategy of targeting al-Qaida in Iraq strongholds is paying off: U.S. casualties have dropped sharply. As of Sunday night in Baghdad, 21 deaths were reported in December, one more than in February 2004, which was the lowest monthly total of the war.

The 899 deaths in 2007 surpassed the previously highest death toll in 2004, when 850 U.S. soldiers were killed. The total for 2007 could rise slightly; occasionally the military reports new casualties a few days after they occur. The military reported the non-combat related death of a soldier on Sunday.

At least 3,902 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the war. Of those, at least 3,175 died as a result of hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

AP

Joseph Anzack Sr., right, hugs his former wife Teresa Anzack, center, and their daughter Casey, 16, in front of the casket carrying their son, Cpl. Joseph Anzack during a public memorial at South High School's football stadium in Torrance, Calif., in this Friday, June 1, 2007 file photo.

Iraq on alert for Saddam anniversary

BAGHDAD (AP)—Hundreds of people, including many children, chanted slogans praising Saddam Hussein on Sunday as they tossed flowers onto his tomb one year after he was executed.

The muted anniversary of Saddam's death saw little violence, a far cry from the blood that was spilt on the day the former Iraqi leader was executed and the horrific wave of killing that ensued until the surge of U.S. troops six months later.

But there were a number of operations carried out by American and Iraqi forces. The U.S. military said coalition forces killed six insurgents and detained another 14 on Saturday and Sunday during operations targeting al-Qaida in Iraq in central and northern parts of the country.

"We realize that security in Iraq is very fragile and tenuous," said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Gregory Smith. He added that although much progress had been made since thousands of extra U.S. troops deployed in June, "there is no place in Iraq today that is safe from terrorism."

Most of the al-Qaida activity has been pushed east out of Anbar province and to the north of Baghdad, into Diyala province and the northern city of Mosul.

"Diyala has been one of the tougher fights," Smith said. "Diyala is an area of significant interest for al-Qaida."

Police reportedly killed a group of four men just outside the city of Beiji, about 155 miles north of Baghdad. The men were thought to be connected to a Christmas day bombing in Beiji that killed 25 people and wounded another 80.

The four men were believed to be Iranian, according to a police spokesman, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak to the media. There was no way to independently confirm the incident and the U.S. military said it did not have any reports about it.

Israel: No peace until militants stopped

JERUSALEM (AP)—Furious over the killing of two Israelis hiking in the West Bank, Israel's prime minister said Sunday that no peace will come until Palestinians crack down on militants, a declaration that clouds a coming visit by President Bush.

To clear the way for Bush to push for progress, the two sides had just agreed to paper over another spat: Israel's plan to build 307 new apartments in a Jewish neighborhood in east Jerusalem, the section claimed by the Palestinians.

But that was before the shooting of two off-duty Israeli soldiers Friday by Palestinian attackers, in a valley near the West Bank city of Hebron. There were two claims of responsibility: one from Hamas and Islamic Jihad; the other from Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, which has ties to Abbas' Fatah movement.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, speaking before the weekly meeting of Israel's Cabinet, denounced the hikers' shooting deaths.

"As long as the Palestinian Authority doesn't take the necessary steps and act with the necessary vigor against terror organizations, Israel won't be able to carry out any change that would expose it to any jeopardy or endanger Israel's security," he said.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, however, saw the talks as an answer to violence. "To address this issue between Palestinians and Israelis, we need the resumption of a meaningful peace process," Erekat said.

Israel's demand for a crackdown on Palestinian militants derives from the internationally backed "road map" peace plan, the agreed basis for the talks. The road map requires dismantling militant groups and Israel has long demanded that such a crackdown precede implementation of any peace accords.

AP

A Palestinian man walks with a donkey with the Dome of the Rock Mosque in the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in the background, in Jerusalem's Old City Sunday Dec. 30, 2007.

WORLD BRIEFS

Mortar kills Somali mother, 5 children

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP)—A mother and her five children were killed Sunday by a mortar round fired during fighting between Somali insurgents and Ethiopian troops. Insurgents attacked bases of Ethiopian troops in the south of the capital with mortars and the Ethiopians fired back, with about 30 mortars fired in all, said Mostaf Abdi Ahmed, a neighbor of the family. "An explosion rocked our neighborhood, then we came out and saw a shack partly on fire and a mother and her five children lying dead," he said. Madey Sufi Mohamed, the husband and father who lost his family, said he had gone to a nearby shop when he heard an explosion and returned home to find his loved ones dead.

Kenya leader re-elected in disputed vote

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki won a second term Sunday amid allegations that the government stole the vote, sparking deadly riots that lit up the night sky as enraged youths torched homes and shouted "Kibaki must go!" Soon after the results were announced, the government suspended live television broadcasts and the slums, home to tens of thousands of opposition supporters, exploded into fresh violence. At least 15 people were killed in fighting across the country, police and witnesses said, although the tally was likely higher.

Pilgrims stuck in Egypt taken to camps

El-ARISH, Egypt (AP)—More than a thousand Palestinian pilgrims, including members of the militant Hamas group, were put in camps in the northern Sinai on Sunday until a dispute over how they will return to the Gaza Strip is resolved. The Palestinians arrived in the Egyptian Red Sea port of Nuweiba in southern Sinai on Saturday after completing their pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. But they have refused Egypt's attempts to have them return to Gaza through the Israeli-controlled Aouja border crossing. Israel fears that if the pilgrims are allowed to return to Gaza through the direct crossing from Egypt at Rafah—where Israel has no control and where European monitors are not working—Hamas militants might get through and sympathizers could smuggle cash to the Islamic group in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Life & Style

Pop-culture moments of 2007

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP NATIONAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—So what really happened in that diner? You know, after the cut-to-black, after the juke box stopped playing "Don't Stop Believin'" and the onion rings were gone? Did Tony Soprano die, or did he live, perhaps not to return to criminal ways but to reinvent himself as an insurance salesman?

Tony wasn't the only pop culture figure to leave us hanging in 2007. And some weren't even fictional. As the year drew to a close, shock jock Don Imus took to the airwaves again, eight months after losing his job over a racist and sexist remark. Would he follow through on his pledge to foster racial dialogue? In the celebrity world, there was Paris Hilton, fresh from that jail stint (maybe you heard about it). How about her promised foray into charity work?

Then there was Britney Spears, still the one we want to know about most, judging by Internet search statistics. What DIDN'T happen to her in 2007? The shaven head, the swinging door of rehab, the comeback performance mercilessly panned, most sadly the custody loss of her sons. Would she rebound from her lowest depths?

Don't worry, these are rhetorical questions. Rather than speculate on an uncertain future, let's take a chronological journey back through a year of pop culture moments:

JANUARY

T.S. Eliot may have said April is the cruelest month, but that was before "AMERICAN IDOL." In 2007 January is pretty cruel, for this is when the Idol judges sink to their snarkiest behavior ever, calling contestants names, laughing behind their backs, insulting their looks. The worst moment: Simon Cowell tells a stunned young man at Seattle tryouts, Kenneth Briggs, that he resembles a "bush baby." (Of course, Briggs is awarded a guest appearance on the finale.)

And at the Golden Globes, "Grey's Anatomy" star ISAIAH WASHINGTON inexplicably gets himself into further trouble by jovially repeating the same gay slur he was at the same time insisting he DIDN'T use when he FIRST got into trouble. Phew! Note to celebrities in hot water: Leave the jokes to the late-night hosts.

FEBRUARY

HELEN MIRREN and MARTIN SCORSESE bask in long-overdue Oscar triumphs, and MIRREN at least is looking very sexy ... yay, middle age! But in our pop culture memories, February will always be ANNA NICOLE SMITH'S month. Her strange life—Playboy bunny, jeans model, reality star, billionaire's wife, Marilyn Monroe impersonator—is eclipsed by her stranger death. As an unsavory cast of characters dukes it out over where she should rest eternally and who gets the baby, the medical examiner says Smith's body lies decomposing faster than expected—as if even this publicity-starved

Anna Nicole Smith during her heyday as a Guess model.

starlet has had enough.

MARCH

There are moments in political life that transcend politics. When ELIZABETH EDWARDS, wife of Democrat John Edwards, announces that her breast cancer has returned and spread, she impresses many—of all political stripes—with her openness and her determination to continue living life just as she lived it before. Some question her husband's decision to stay in the race, but cancer survivors cheer the decision to approach the illness as a manageable condition. At year's end she is still actively campaigning for her husband.

APRIL

It's not even a moment, just a couple of seconds: A quick comment on a video clip of the Rutgers women's basketball team lands DON IMUS in the biggest trouble of his career. His "nappy-headed hos" remark triggers a gathering storm of outrage that leads to his firing—and for once, the ritual apology by a celebrity just isn't cutting it. Imus' critics want consequences, not apologies, and they get them—but they last only eight months (see December.)

Don Imus had the biggest trouble of his career this year.

MAY

A big month for movies, especially the "threequel." Unfortunately, three isn't the charm for "Spider-Man 3," "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End," and "Shrek the Third," which don't quite reach the heights of earlier installments. Director JUDD APATOW tickles our funnybones with his profane yet touching "Knocked Up," and MICHAEL MOORE fans publicity for his newest (and arguably most effective) documentary, "Sicko," with a trip to Cuba that gets him in trouble with the government.

JUNE

TONY SOPRANO says goodbye, and countless fans curse the cable company, thinking that cut-to-black was a malfunction. HILLARY CLINTON spoofs the ending in a video satire that wins points for cleverness. But we're all equal in the YouTube universe, and thus Obama Girl gets just as much attention—that's Amber Lee Ettinger, the model/actress/former pageant contestant whose racy "I Got A Crush On Obama" is one of the most-watched clips of the year. PARIS HILTON spends 23 days in jail for violating probation in an alcohol-related reckless driving case. Later she tells LARRY KING she spent her time reading the Bible, though she can't recall a favorite verse, or, well, any verse at all. And wait, we're not done! This is the month that SEN. LARRY CRAIG of Idaho makes that fateful trip to the airport restroom. His "wide stance" explanation will be endlessly spoofed, including by BRAD PITT and GEORGE CLOONEY on a tribute show for JULIA ROBERTS.

Paris Hilton spent 23 days in jail for violating probation in an alcohol-related reckless driving case.

JULY

HARRY POTTER'S month, hands down, with the release of the seventh and final installment in J.K. Rowling's insanely successful series. We won't reveal details of the adorable young wizard's fate in case any of you (like us) haven't gotten around to reading it yet, in any of the 64 languages that Potter books have been published in. But here's a choice tidbit not found in the book: later this year Rowling announces that the beloved character Dumbledore was gay.

AUGUST

What time is it? If you're a tween or live in close proximity to one, you know the answer: It's time for "High School Musical 2," the sequel to the hugely popular Disney Channel movie. In this scrubbed-up, 21st-century "Grease," high school never looked so clean, so gentle, so tolerant, with cliques that melt like butter and mean girls that aren't really mean. Realistic? As legions of fans would say, whatever!! More than 17 million watch the first telecast alone, making it TV's biggest event of the summer. Zac Efron and Vanessa Hudgens are bona fide stars, which makes it ...

SEPTEMBER

... a little awkward when nude photos of Hudgens surface on the Web. Will Disney disown its dark-haired sweetheart, heroine to countless young girls? Surely you jest (for one thing, there's the upcoming "High School Musical 3" to consider.) Hudgens apologizes, and life at East High goes on. BRITNEY SPEARS could only hope for such a smooth landing. But it's bumpy, bumpy, bumpy for the troubled pop icon, who hazards a comeback at MTV's Video Music Awards, only to stumble through her song as if she were sloshing through mud. An unfortunately revealing sequined bikini guarantees the next day's painful headlines, but not nearly as painful as a few weeks later, when ...

AP

Britney Spears arrives for the grand opening party of LAX nightclub at the Luxor hotel-casino in Las Vegas, in a Sept. 1, 2007 file photo.

OCTOBER

... Spears loses custody of her two toddler sons to ex-hubby KEVIN FEDERLINE. Though her album, "Blackout," is well-reviewed, her personal struggles continue with no end in sight. On a less serious note, the world spends a few days pondering the fate of IGGY THE TERRIER, first adopted by ELLEN DEGENERES, then given to her hairdresser's kid, then taken away according to the rescue agency's regulations. "Please, please, please, just give the dog back," DeGeneres weeps on national TV. But later she has to plead with angry fans to stop threatening the agency.

Speaking of strange things on talk shows, is that really LYNNE CHENEY on Jon Stewart's show, greeting him with a Darth Vader doll (a joking reference to hubby Dick) and getting a friendly, respectful reception? And speaking of Stewart, we told you last year there would be no Stewart/Colbert ticket in 2008 'cause, well, these guys are just comedians. Turns out we were only half right. For in October, conservative faux-pundit Stephen Colbert announces he's running, but only in South Carolina, his native state, which ....

NOVEMBER

... rejects him. State Democrats vote 13-3 to disallow his bid. Their lame reason? That he's not serious. Bah, humbug! At least South Carolina will get OPRAH: The talk-show mogul announces that she'll campaign for her favorite guy BARACK OBAMA in the key early voting states. Can Winfrey sparkle her candidate with the same fairy dust that makes books—even really old ones—sudden best sellers? And here's one youngster that's obviously gotten her hands on some fairy dust: MILEY CYRUS, aka Disney's HANNAH MONTANA, turns 15 amid one of the very the hottest concert tours of the year. Hottest KIDS tours, you ask? No, hottest tours period, with tickets selling out in minutes and scalpers having a field day. In Florida, a man hangs onto a pole for much of six days in a contest to win tickets for his fiancee's daughter.

DECEMBER

December completes the circle for Don Imus, who debuts his new show on WABC with a cast that includes two black comedians and a promise to "never say anything in my lifetime that will make any of these young women at Rutgers regret ... that they accepted my apology." He also pledges to use his new show to discuss race relations.

Will Imus be one of the first pop culture figures to actually make his apology mean something? We'll have to get back to you on that.

Zac Efron of "High School Musical 2" fame.

2007's wacky and tacky celebs

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Sometimes life gets so crazy that you just want to shave your head, stop wearing underwear in public and go to rehab.

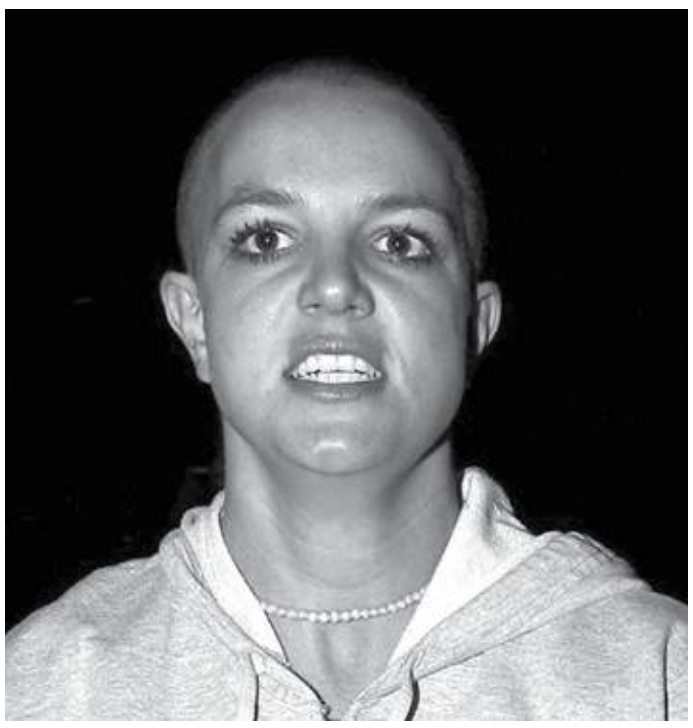
Wait ... you didn't have those urges this year? Then you obviously didn't reside in Hollywood, where such shenanigans aren't considered antics, but a regular way of life. That's why we're glad we could only witness this year's hot Hollywood mess unfold from the safety of our own celeb-free homes.

Here are just a few reasons to thank the heavens above you're not famous:

■■■

Britney Spears—The Fat Elvis Years

Actually, that's an unfair comparison—to Elvis. All the King ever did was get fat and drugged up. Britney's exploits were so wild and distasteful even Michael Jackson would disapprove. A quick recap in the year of Britney: She shaved her head bald (then went out drinking and partying), went to rehab (then went out drinking and partying), got divorced from K-Fed (then went out drinking and partying), prepared for a comeback performance on the MTV Video Music Awards (by drinking and partying)—and bombed in epic fashion (then went out drinking and partying). Finally, she lost physical custody of her kids—and then went out drinking and partying. Despite all this, she did manage to put out an album that actually got critical acclaim. We're sure she'll drink to that—actually, she already has.



Britney's exploits this year were so wild and distasteful even Michael Jackson would disapprove. She is shown here during her bald phase.

■■■

Now That Whitney's Sober...

Well, someone had to take over that jittery, substance-abusing pop star role. And despite all Brit's hard work to get the coveted spot, it was a natural for Amy Winehouse. The British retro-soul singer—who made Hollywood's 2007 theme song, "Rehab"—was photographed with a suspicious white powder lining her nostrils, walked the streets barefoot with only a bra and jeans, and got into an altercation with someone (maybe her husband, maybe not) that left her makeup smudged and her shoes bloody. She canceled tours because of "health concerns" and when she did perform in recent months, she made Britney look like Beyonce. Now we know what she's been hiding in that massive beehive hairdo.

Amy Winehouse was photographed with a suspicious white powder lining her nostrils, walked the streets barefoot with only a bra and jeans.

■■■

How Lo Can She Go?

Let's just put it this way: The flashing of her firecrotch last year can now be considered part of the demure Lindsay Lohan era. She was arrested twice, got into two car accidents, went to rehab—again, twice—and did an 84-minute stint in jail. Among her most embarrassing episodes was getting caught with a packet of cocaine in her pants while going after the MOTHER of her former personal assistant in a wild car chase. Lohan claimed the drugs weren't hers and actually just belonged to a friend. Who knew she and Amy Winehouse were buddies?

AP

Actress Lindsay Lohan is shown at a Los Angeles Lakers game in this Dec. 2, 2007 file photo in Los Angeles.

■■■

This Kind Of Makes Up For O.J.

In the state that let Robert Blake, O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson walk free, authorities finally got tough on a true menace to society—Paris Hilton. The bimbo heiress was sentenced to 45 days for a probation violation involving an alcohol-related driving offense—and that was cut to 23 before she even entered the clink. Her hysterics and a "medical condition" got her released after just four days, but public outcry led a judge to haul the distraught socialite back to jail to finish the remainder of her sentence. After she was released, a chastened Hilton promised to do more charity work, and promised to help Rwanda. Her good-will mission was postponed, however, perhaps when she found out that Rwanda was an impoverished nation in Africa, and not a poor girl in dire need of a makeover.

■■■

Feud Of The Year

Rosie O'Donnell versus Donald Trump. And Elisabeth Hasselbeck. And Barbara Walters. And ... OK, let's just put Rosie vs. just about everybody—she had more beefs going than 50 Cent. Unlike 50, though, O'Donnell actually did fade from the limelight after defeat: She quit "The View" earlier than scheduled when Hasselbeck took her down a notch during one of their regular catfights. Of course, losing a battle of wits with a lightweight like Hasselbeck would be enough to send anyone into exile.

Rosie O'Donnell versus Donald Trump.

■■■

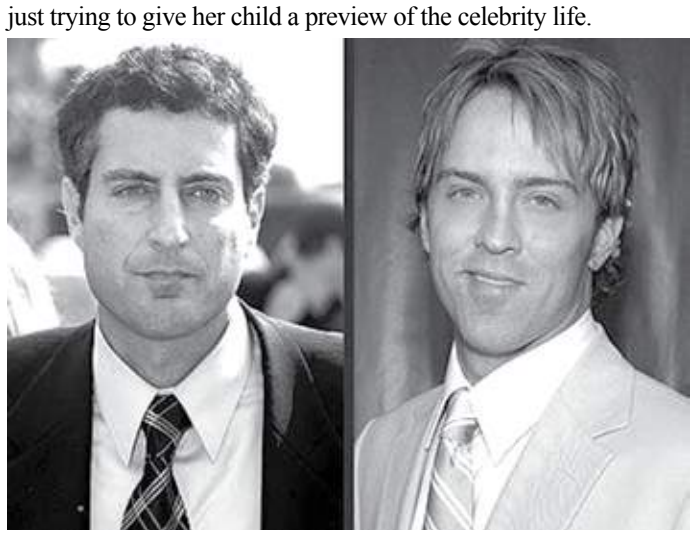
The Michael Richards Diversity Award

So much competition for this one! "Grey's Anatomy's" Isaiah Washington seemed to have it locked up for uttering the homophobic f-bomb, setting the stage for his dismissal from the hit show. Not to be outdone, the always politically incorrect Don Imus did him one better when he called Rutgers University women's basketball team "nappy headed hos"—and subsequently lost both his radio and TV gigs (though he was back on the radio by the end of the year). Still, the white hood goes to Duane "Dog" Chapman, the reality show bounty hunter whose own son taped him delivering the N-word with gusto during a phone conversation. He claimed he was just trying to be black (he apparently didn't know the safer option—watching a Tyler Perry movie).

■■■

The Baby Is Already On A Diet

Nicole Richie, Hollywood's poster child for eating disorders, announced that she was pregnant with the spawn of Good Charlotte's Joel Madden. In preparation for motherhood, Richie did actually gain a few pounds, curtailed her partying—and did an 82-minute stint in jail for driving under the influence of drugs. Maybe she was just trying to give her child a preview of the celebrity life.



Howard Stern and Larry Birkhead have a paternity battle over Anna Nicole Smith's infant daughter Dannielynn.

■■■

R.I.P.—We Think Not

Last year's "Trainwreck of the Year," Anna Nicole Smith, showed us we were a little too accurate by dying of a drug overdose in 2007 (note we were merciful in not naming one this year). After her untimely death, it seemed as if the Smith sideshow was over. But it had only just begun! There was the Larry Birkhead-Howard Stern paternity battle over her infant daughter Dannielynn, Virgie Arthur's attempt to get custody of her grandaughter, and the weekslong battle over where Anna Nicole would be buried as her body decomposed. If you had to deal with that drama every day, you'd check out early too.

■■■

Father Knows Best

The best insults, that is, if we're discussing Alec Baldwin. In a phone message to his 11-year-old daughter that was leaked to the media, the actor is heard calling her a "rude, thoughtless little pig" in a verbal tirade for missing a scheduled phone call from dear old dad. An apologetic Baldwin later claimed he didn't mean to direct those comments at his child—he thought he was talking to a customer service rep based in India.

In a phone message to his 11-year-old daughter that was leaked to the media, Alec Baldwin is heard calling her a "rude, thoughtless little pig."

■■■

Kid Rock vs. Tommy Lee

The pimp-slap heard 'round the world was delivered on Tommy Lee by Kid Rock at—where else?—the MTV Video Music Awards. As Alicia Keys warbled on stage, Rock and Lee tussled, and Lee ended up getting tossed from the show. Everyone thought they were fighting over their mutual ex, Pamela Anderson, but they were really fighting over her visitation rights to her implants.

Quotes from the year in entertainment

From Lindsay Lohan to Kanye West, quotes from the year in entertainment:

"She has brought a new vitality to this show and the ratings prove it."

—Barbara Walters, on Rosie O'Donnell, her new co-host on "The View."

■ ■ ■

"He wounded millions of women by saying that I was fat, you know?"

—Rosie O'Donnell, on her war of words with Donald Trump.

■ ■ ■

"I felt very remorseful for having thrown the phone at someone that didn't deserve it. I have a deep sense of shame for the things I've done."

—Naomi Campbell.

■ ■ ■

"With the support of my family and friends, I have begun counseling. I regard this as a necessary step toward understanding why I did what I did and making sure it never happens again."

—Isaiah Washington, on undergoing treatment for his use of an anti-gay slur against a "Grey's Anatomy" castmate.

■ ■ ■

"I'm ready to make nice!"

—Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks, accepting the Grammy for album of the year for "Taking the Long Way."

■ ■ ■

"Could you double check the envelope?"

—Martin Scorsese, winner of thebest director Oscar for "The Departed."

■ ■ ■

"I've been chased and hounded for 10 months and told I'm a publicity-seeker, yet I've never gone out and done anything."

—Heather Mills, on her high-profile divorce from Paul McCartney.

■ ■ ■

"I'm a good person, but I said a bad thing. But these young women deserve to know it was not said with malice."

—Don Imus, on his racial slur against the Rutgers women's basketball team.

■ ■ ■

"I hate to be the one who told you this, but I told you so: I'm the father!"

—Larry Birkhead, saying DNA results showed he is the father of Anna Nicole Smith's infant daughter.

■ ■ ■

"I'm sorry, as everyone who knows me is aware, for losing my temper with my child."

—Alec Baldwin, caught yelling at his daughter on a leaked voicemail message.

■ ■ ■

"All my assumptions about myself are confused when people like the work. On some level, it's almost more comfortable for it to go the other way."

—Judd Apatow, on his success as a filmmaker.

■ ■ ■

"Recently, I was sent to a very humbling place called rehab. I truly hit rock bottom. Till this day I don't think that it was alcohol or depression. I was like a bad kid running around with ADD."

—Britney Spears.

■ ■ ■

"I think it's a great ending. It's a good way to go out."

—Michael Imperioli, on the love-it-or-hate-it finale of "The Sopranos."

■ ■ ■

"I used to act dumb. It was an act. I am 26 years old, and that act is no longer cute."

—Paris Hilton.

■ ■ ■

"It's sad that the whole world had to watch her make mistakes that all of us have made at one time or another."

—Britney Spears' mother, Lynne.

■ ■ ■

"We want to have fun. That's one of the many reasons for this, for our children to see what we used to do."

—Victoria Beckham, on the Spice Girls' reunion tour.

■ ■ ■

"Finishing it was very, very emotional. It was a combination of relief and sadness really."

—J.K. Rowling, on completing the final edition of her "Harry Potter" boy wizard series.

■ ■ ■

"Hearing the words and saying it and seeing—it's surreal."

—Robin Roberts, anchor of "Good Morning America," on discovering she had breast cancer.

■ ■ ■

"Someone needs to teach you some class, my friend."

—Faith Hill, berating a female fan from the stage at a concert in Louisiana. The woman had grabbed Hill's husband, Tim McGraw, in the crotch area at the close of his set.

■ ■ ■

"When they are with him, he is going to shield his children from unwanted media attention. You will not find a picture of Kevin parading with the children out in a public place."

—Kevin Federline attorney Mark Vincent Kaplan.

■ ■ ■

"Yes I am."

—Nicole Richie, confirming reports of her pregnancy.

■ ■ ■

"I would sooner, in exactly what I'm wearing, walk on the surface of the moon. Does that answer it?"

—Charlie Sheen, on whether he would have a third child with ex-wife Denise Richards.

■ ■ ■

"My biggest inspiration and biggest competition is Justin Timberlake. ... We push each other. I look at me and Justin like Prince and Michael Jackson in their day."

—Kanye West.

■ ■ ■

"I respectfully ask that the media allow me to receive care and heal in private during this difficult time."

—Owen Wilson, after his alleged suicide attempt.

■ ■ ■

"Gabriel and I are beyond excited, and I've waited a long time for this moment in life."

—Halle Berry, on expecting her first child with her boyfriend, Gabriel Aubry.

■ ■ ■

"We're not done. They say, 'Any plans for a fifth?' And I say, 'And a sixth, and a seventh, and an eighth, and a ninth.' That's my answer."

—Brad Pitt, on his growing family with Angelina Jolie.

■ ■ ■

"I got a cracked rib, so I'm not jogging right now. No jumping jacks."

—George Clooney, following a motorcycle accident.

■ ■ ■

"It was a sobering experience. It was humbling. It made me look at myself, and all of the people, places and things in my life in a different way. I was in there for substance abuse, after all."

—Lindsay Lohan.

■ ■ ■

"Please, please, please, just give the dog back."

—Ellen DeGeneres, after a pet rescue agency took back the adopted terrier she had given away to her hairdresser's family.

■ ■ ■

"I don't just love him, I like him. We are an oddly good match."

—Pamela Anderson, on her new husband, Rick Salomon.

■ ■ ■

"After nearly 15 minutes of soul-searching, I have heard the call."

—Stephen Colbert, announcing his candidacy for president.

"The first words out of her mouth when she saw us all leaning over her were, 'Oh, crap.'"

—Tom Bergeron, on Marie Osmond's fainting spell on "Dancing With the Stars."

■ ■ ■

"It was great. I'm a little tired, but it was worth it."

—Katie Holmes, on running the New York City Marathon.

■ ■ ■

"When I first heard about it I spent about a half-hour going around my house crying."

—Oprah Winfrey, on learning of allegations that a dorm matron at her South African academy for disadvantaged girls had abused students.

■ ■ ■

"I thought that I was cool enough in the black world to be able to use that word as a brother to a brother. I'm not."

—Duane "Dog" Chapman, star of "Dog the Bounty Hunter," apologizing for using the N-word conversationally.

■ ■ ■

"My wife has been in California for about three weeks. ... Holy smokes. Wow, you just knocked the bottom out of me."

—Hulk Hogan, after learning that his wife had filed for divorce.

■ ■ ■

"I've never discussed it with anybody before—intentionally. I thought maybe I would tell it to Caroline when I met her someday."

—Neil Diamond, revealing that President Kennedy's daughter was the inspiration for his smash hit "Sweet Caroline."

■ ■ ■

"I just wasn't commenting. I'm not being like, 'Hey everybody, I'm pregnant!' I'm not that girl."

—Christina Aguilera.

■ ■ ■

"The biggest phenomenon in all this is that the kid's been able to keep her head on her shoulders. She hasn't flipped out. I'm going to knock on wood."

—Billy Ray Cyrus, on his 15-year-old daughter, Miley, star of the Disney Channel series "Hannah Montana."

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The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep

Friday		4:20	7:30	9:50
Sat and Sun	1:15	4:20	7:30	9:50
Monday		4:20	7:30	9:50
Tueday	1:15	4:20	7:30	9:50
Wed and Thurs		4:20	7:30	9:50

Emily Watson, Ben Chaplin
Family, Adventure • Rated PG

Synopsis

When Angus, a young Scottish boy, finds an enchanted egg, he takes it home and soon finds himself face-to-face with an amazing creature: the mythical "water horse" of Scottish lore. Angus begins a journey of discovery, facing his greatest fears and risking his life to protect a secret that would give birth to a legend.

National Treasure: Book of Secrets

Friday		4:00	7:00	9:45
Sat and Sun	1:00	4:00	7:00	9:45
Monday		4:00	7:00	9:45
Tueday	1:00	4:00	7:00	9:45
Wed and Thurs		4:00	7:00	9:45

Nicolas Cage, Diane Kruger
Action, Adventure • Rated PG

Synopsis

When a missing page from the diary of John Wilkes Booth surfaces, Ben's great-great grandfather is suddenly implicated as a key conspirator in Abraham Lincoln's death. Determined to prove his ancestor's innocence, Ben follows an international chain of clues that takes him on a chase from Paris to London and ultimately back to America. This journey leads Ben and his crew not only to surprising revelations—but to the trail of the world's most treasured secrets.

Charlie Wilson's War

Friday		4:10	7:15	9:30
Sat and Sun	1:20	4:10	7:15	9:30
Monday		4:10	7:15	9:30
Tueday	1:20	4:10	7:15	9:30
Wed and Thurs		4:10	7:15	9:30

Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts
Comedy, Biopic • Rated R

Synopsis

Charlie Wilson was a bachelor congressman from Texas who had a habit of showing up in hot tubs with strippers and cocaine. His "Good Time Charlie" exterior, however, masked an extraordinary mind, a deep sense of patriotism and a passion for the underdog, and in the early 1980s the underdog was Afghanistan—which had just been brutally invaded by the Russians. Charlie's longtime friend and patron and sometime lover was Joanne Herring, one of the wealthiest women in Texas and a virulent anti-communist.

Walk Hard: Dewey Cox Story

Friday		4:25	7:05	9:55
Sat and Sun	1:25	4:25	7:05	9:55
Monday		4:25	7:05	9:55
Tueday	1:25	4:25	7:05	9:55
Wed and Thurs		4:25	7:05	9:55

John C. Reilly, Jenna Fischer
Comedy, Music • Rated R

P.S. I Love You

Friday		4:30	7:25	9:40
Sat and Sun	1:30	4:30	7:25	9:40
Monday		4:30	7:25	9:40
Tueday	1:30	4:30	7:25	9:40
Wed and Thurs		4:30	7:25	9:40

Hilary Swank, Gerald Butler
Drama, Adaptation • Rated PG13

★ ★ ★

I Am Legend

Friday		4:15	7:20	10:00
Sat and Sun	1:10	4:15	7:20	10:00
Monday		4:15	7:20	10:00
Tueday	1:10	4:15	7:20	10:00
Wed and Thurs		4:15	7:20	10:00

Will Smith, Alice Braga
Action, Sci-Fi, Adventure • Rated PG13

Alvin & The Chipmunks

Friday		4:05	7:10	9:35
Sat and Sun	1:05	4:05	7:10	9:35
Monday		4:05	7:10	9:35
Tueday	1:05	4:05	7:10	9:35
Wed and Thurs		4:05	7:10	9:35

Jason Lee, Cameron Richardson
Comedy, Family • Rated PG

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Start the New Year by taking small steps to big changes

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR READERS: The new year has arrived, and with it our chance for a new beginning. This is the day we discard destructive old habits for healthy new ones. With that in mind, I am sharing Dear Abby's often-requested list of New Year's resolutions -- which were adapted by my mother, Pauline Phillips, from the original credo of Al-Anon.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will live through this day only. I will not brood about yesterday or obssess about tomorrow. I will not set far-reaching goals or try to overcome all of my problems at once.

I know that I can do something for 24 hours that would overwhelm me if I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will be happy. I will not dwell on thoughts that depress me. If my mind fills with clouds, I will chase them away and fill it with sunshine.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept what is. I will face reality. I will correct those things I can correct and accept those I cannot.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will improve my mind. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration. I will not be a mental loafer.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make a conscious effort to be agreeable. I will be kind and courteous to those who cross my path, and I'll not speak ill of others. I will improve my appearance, speak softly, and not interrupt when someone else is talking.

Just for today, I will refrain from improving anybody but myself.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will do something positive to improve my health. If I'm a smoker, I'll quit. If I am overweight, I will eat healthfully -- if only just for today. And not only that, I will get off the couch and take a brisk walk, even if it's only around the block.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will gather the courage to do what is right and take responsibility for my own actions.

And now, Dear Readers, I would like to share an item that was sent to me by I.J. Bhatia, a reader who lives in New Delhi, India:

DEAR ABBY: This year, no resolutions, only some guidelines. The Holy Vedas say: "Man has subjected himself to thousands of self-inflicted bondages. Wisdom comes to a man who lives according to the true eternal laws of nature."

The following prayer of Saint Francis contains a powerful message:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
"Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
"Where there is injury, pardon;
"Where there is doubt, faith;
"Where there is despair, hope;
"Where there is darkness, light;
"Where there is sadness, joy;
"O Divine Master, grant that I may not as much seek to be consoled as to console;
"To be loved as to love.
"For it is in giving that we are pardoned;
"It is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

And so, Dear Readers, may this New Year bring with it peace and joy.

-- LOVE, ABBY

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Times Square ball goes green

The new Times Square New Year's Eve ball is seen lit up as it moves along the flagpole on the roof of One Times Square in New York during the annual test of the ball, Sunday, Dec. 30, 2007.
AP

NEW YORK (AP)—The Times Square New Year's Eve ball is celebrating its centennial by going green.

The star of the world-famous holiday extravaganza was revamped this year with 9,576 energy-efficient bulbs that use about the same amount of electricity as 10 toasters.

Philips Lighting, which created the light-emitting diodes, or LED bulbs, specifically for the event, says they are smaller but more than twice as bright as last year's lights, which were a mix of more than 600 incandescent and halogen bulbs. And the new lights can create more than 16 million colors for a kaleidoscope of hues against the 672 Waterford Crystal triangles.

"The whole world looks up to New York's New Year's Eve. I'm proud to be able to save energy and show off this technology to the world with such a special event," said Kaj den Daas, chairman of Philips Lighting North America.

The ball was first dropped for the New Year's Eve celebration in 1907. Made of iron and wood, it weighed 700 pounds and was lit with 100 25-watt incandescent bulbs.

Over the century, five other versions of the ball were designed to ring in the New Year. In 1999, the ball was made from crystal to welcome the new millennium.

This year, the motif is "Let There Be Light" and features a stylized, radiating sunburst on each of the crystal triangles.

The new design and technology "will make the ball glow like nothing else," said Tim Tompkins, president of the Times Square Alliance, a business group in charge of the event.

The ball was tested successfully Sunday afternoon, making its way slowly up and down the 77-foot flagpole atop 1 Times Square with bursts of color.

More than a million revelers were expected to crowd the streets for the annual New Year's Eve celebration Monday.

Also this year, wishes from people around the world will be included among the confetti dropped when the clock strikes midnight. For the first time, people can write wishes for the New Year on the multicolored confetti by visiting the Times Square Information Center or by typing a message on a "virtual wishing wall" online.

Those message-carrying pieces will be mixed in with the rest of the more than one ton of confetti, organizers said.

'Treasure' tops weekend at $35.6 million

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Fortune-seeker Nicolas Cage, lonely guy Will Smith and a pack of talking chipmunks ended Hollywood's year on a happy note. Cage's "National Treasure: Book of Secrets" was the No. 1 movie for a second weekend with $35.6 million, followed by "Alvin and the Chipmunks" with $30 million and Smith's "I Am Legend" with $27.5 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Those hits along with a solid crop of other holdovers and new movies that opened Christmas Day capped a year-end hot streak for Hollywood, whose business soared the last few weeks after a sluggish fall.

"It's being spread among three or four key movies, then another six or seven or eight below that, which is great," said Mark Zoradi, president of the motion-picture group at Disney, which released "National Treasure."

The top 12 movies took in $169.2 million, up 18 percent from the final weekend of 2006, when "Night at the Museum" led the box office with $36.8 million.

Hollywood will finish the year with record revenues of about $9.7 billion, up from the previous best of $9.45 billion in 2004, according to box-office tracker Media By Numbers.

Since prices are higher, the revenue represents actual admissions that were up only a fraction over 2006's and fell well short of modern Hollywood's record of 1.6 billion tickets sold in 2002.

With the holidays falling on Tuesday, many people have been taking five-day weekends, a boost for the movie business. Many students are off from school until next week, too.

"It's turned into like a two-week-long weekend for the movie industry," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of Media By Numbers.

"National Treasure," a sequel with Cage chasing historical clues to find a legendary city of gold, raised its domestic total to $124 million.

"Alvin and the Chipmunks," from 20th Century Fox, lifted its haul to $142.4 million. The Warner Bros. hit "I Am Legend," with Smith as a plague survivor who may be the last man alive, has climbed to $194.6 million.

Opening with huge numbers in limited release was Paramount Vantage's "There Will Be Blood," starring Daniel Day-Lewis in a tale of greed and violence during California's oil boom in the early 20th century.

Hometown paper honors Jennifer Garner

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP)—Actress Jennifer Garner has been honored as the 2007 West Virginian of the Year by her hometown newspaper.

The Sunday Gazette-Mail says it chose Garner for her dedication, hard work and service as an ambassador and role model for West Virginia.

Garner is balancing the raising of her 2-year-old daughter Violet, her marriage with fellow actor Ben Affleck and a career that includes a starring role in "Cyrano de Bergerac" on Broadway, the new film "Juno," and two more films yet to shoot.

Garner is actually a Texas transplant, but moved to the Mountain State as a 4-year-old and considers West Virginia home.

AP
Actress Jennifer Garner arrives at the 2007 Glamour Magazine "Women of the Year" awards at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, in this Nov. 5, 2007 file photo in New York.

Stone joins hostage-release mission

VILLAVICENCIO, Colombia (AP)—With its fearsome record of kidnapping and violence, Colombia's largest guerrilla army might seem a nightmare group to encounter. But not to Oliver Stone. The American filmmaker is jumping at a chance to meet with a group the U.S. classifies as a terrorist organization.

Leaving the glamor of Hollywood far behind, Stone arrived in the steamy Colombian city of Villavicencio on Saturday as part of a mission led by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to retrieve three hostages held for years by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

"I have no illusions about the FARC, but it looks like they are a peasant army fighting for a decent living," Stone said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press at his hotel bar. "And here, if you fight, you fight to win."

Stone is part of an international delegation expected to fly by helicopter as early as Sunday into the country's eastern jungles, an area the size of France, to collect the captives: former congresswoman Consuelo Gonzalez, Clara Rojas and her young son Emmanuel, who was fathered by one of her guerrilla captors.

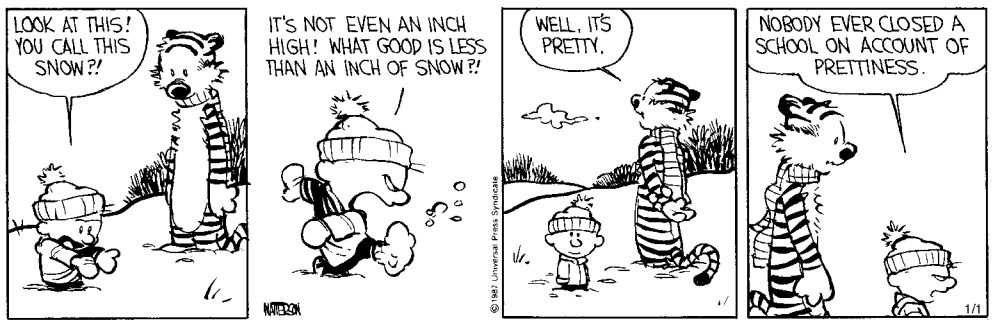
When asked if he's concerned the heavily armed guerrillas could turn on him, he joked: "Well, if they took us, they would be swapping three hostages for 10," referring to himself and observers from five Latin America countries, France and Switzerland, along to supervise the release. "If I were them, that would make sense.

"But seriously, no, I'm not worried. The FARC knows there would be universal condemnation if they did that," said Stone, whose arrival has ramped up the media circus that already surrounds the pending handover.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


LOOK AT THIS! YOU CALL THIS SNOW?!
IT'S NOT EVEN AN INCH HIGH! WHAT GOOD IS LESS THAN AN INCH OF SNOW?!
WELL, IT'S PRETTY.
NOBODY EVER CLOSED A SCHOOL ON ACCOUNT OF PRETTINESS.
WATTERSON
© 1987 Universal Press Syndicate
1/1

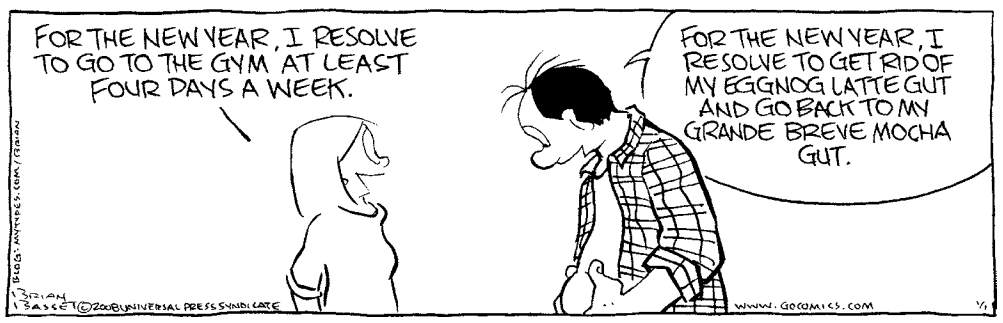
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

OKAY, SO MAYBE GRETA DIDN'T WORK OUT AS A PET SITTER... I'M SORRY
© 2008 PAWS, INC. All Rights Reserved.
HOW'D SHE BEND THE COUCH, ANYWAY?
DOING A CLEAN AND JERK WITH IT
JIM DAVIS 1-1
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


FOR THE NEW YEAR, I RESOLVE TO GO TO THE GYM AT LEAST FOUR DAYS A WEEK.
FOR THE NEW YEAR, I RESOLVE TO GET RID OF MY EGGNOG LATTE GUT AND GO BACK TO MY GRANDE BREVE MOCHA GUT.
BRIAN BASSET ©2007UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE
WWW.GOCOMICS.COM

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

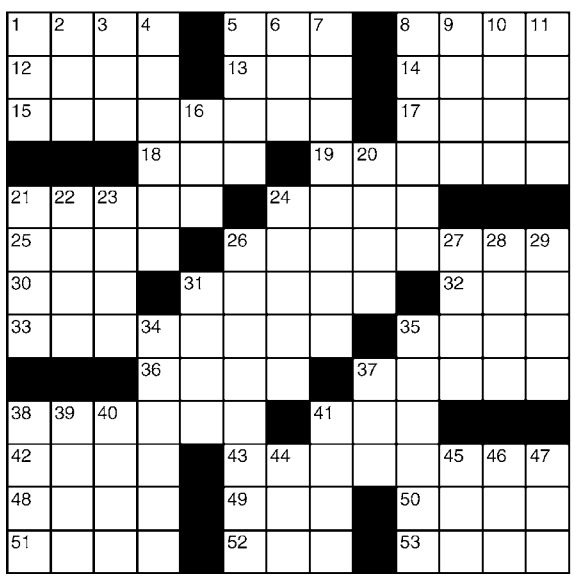
ACROSS
1 He raised Cain
5 Tabby
8 Move like a butterfly
12 "— and the Tramp"
13 Mess up
14 Puerto —
15 Sleeplessness
17 Addict
18 Margarine square
19 Whim
21 Moving
24 Genesis name
25 Detail, for short
26 Weatherproof, in a way
30 Beachgoer's shade
31 "West Side Story" role
32 Nourished
33 Craziness
35 Pull
36 Common queries, online
37 Poetry's antithesis
38 Where naturally located (Lat.)
41 "Caught ya!"
42 Nitwit
43 Badge of authority
48 Malefic-ence
49 Fairway start
50 Galley conveyors
51 Hourglass fill
52 Verily
53 Tide type

DOWN
1 — Baba
2 Quarterback Marino
3 Billboards
4 Nearsighted
5 Penny
6 Onassis, familiarly
7 Farce
8 Thrifty
9 Sax-playing Simpson
10 Bakery worker, at times
11 Superconservative
16 Ruin the veneer
20 Water, in Oaxaca
21 Italian wine district
22 Bridge
23 Sawbucks
24 Fits of peevishness
26 Wickedness
27 Roundish hairstyle
28 Afternoon socials
29 Ford car
31 Body study (Abbr.)
34 Out of the way
35 St. George's victim
37 — Beta Kappa
38 Mid-month date
39 Exploding star
40 Whirl
41 On the briny
44 Born
45 Scot's refusal
46 Playwright Levin
47 Cleo's slayer

Solution time: 21 mins.

O	I	L		T	U	B	A	S		R	O	B
A	L	E		I	N	O	N	E		A	V	E
F	L	E	E	T	W	O	O	D		P	E	R
			A	L	I		D	A	T	I	N	G
S	O	F	T	E	N		E	N	I	D		
O	R	A		D	D	T		S	E	C	T	S
M	A	S	S		S	U	V		S	I	R	E
A	L	T	A	R		N	E	B		T	E	A
			T	R	I	S		S	A	W	Y	E	R
P	U	R	I	S	T		I	C	E			
E	V	A		Q	U	I	C	K	S	A	N	D
S	E	C		U	N	C	L	E		I	R	E
O	A	K		E	T	H	E	R		M	A	C

Yesterday's answer 1-1



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Verne Troyer, 39; Michael Imperioli, 42; Dedee Pfeiffer, 44; Grandmaster Flash, 50

Happy Birthday: Emotional matters may stop you from taking advantage of an opportunity that can map your future. Come up with viable plans that will help you get underway. Be a team player, remembering that you are only as strong as your weakest link. Be prepared to make up for whatever others are lacking and you will come out on top. Your numbers are 10, 23, 25, 30, 41, 48

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Look for a creative venue that will allow you to make extra cash: an interesting investment, business or even a partner who has cash to put behind you. Get everything in writing before you proceed. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Bring in the new year with people of distinction. It's who you meet that will determine the possibilities that lie ahead. Comment about your concerns, plans and ideas and you will be able to set up meetings for later in the month. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Look for any excuse to discuss your future with someone you trust or who has experience. You'll be in fast forward with your mind moving a mile a minute with ideas. Be affectionate with the one you favor most. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Avoid anyone who is being overindulgent today. Criticism will not be taken lightly and could lead to a feud. Observe what's going on and weigh your options. You may want to make a couple of changes. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Have fun remembering days gone by with someone you respect, love and cherish. An adventure is in the stars, so don't hesitate to try new things. Give back as much as you get. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): It's a new year and a new you. Rid yourself of all the things that just aren't working for you. There is so much to take advantage of but you have to be free and clear of the past. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Overindulgent people will cause trouble for you. Travel to visit friends or relatives with whom you want to bring in the new year, rather than sitting at home. Don't let someone else's emotional confusion get to you. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't let a bragger make you feel as if you aren't doing as well as you should. With precision, timing and a big push, you can turn all your hard work into something worthwhile. Good fortune is heading your direction. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Take a serious look at your situation and your health. If you haven't been taking good care of yourself, make it your resolution to start now. Exercise, diet and good habits coupled with a little hard work and strategy will correct any misdeeds of the past. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't count on getting any sympathy if you are complaining about your life. Someone is always worse off and you will be reminded of that. A good idea will develop if you talk to friends and family. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): It's time to make a few personal changes that will be sure to grab the attention of the people around you. A fresh, clean look will bring back your youthful image. A chance to come into money is looking positive. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You may not feel the same way you used to about some of the people in your life. Size up your situation and prepare to decrease the clutter. You need more time and space to do the things you've always dreamed about. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are determined, aggressive and calculating. You will always fight for your beliefs. You are loyal, dedicated and practical, with a strong sense of justice.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		2		3	9	6		
	7						8	
5			8					4
6						5		
4			9	5	3			8
		9						1
8					2			9
	2						5	
		6	3	8		4		

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/01

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

4	6	9	8	7	1	5	3	2
5	8	1	3	2	4	6	9	7
3	7	2	5	9	6	8	4	1
7	9	6	2	5	3	1	8	4
8	1	5	4	6	7	3	2	9
2	3	4	1	8	9	7	5	6
1	5	8	6	4	2	9	7	3
6	2	7	9	3	8	4	1	5
9	4	3	7	1	5	2	6	8

Difficulty Level ★ 12/31

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

RUSSIAN LEADERS **Solution: 9 letters**

R	S	S	A	L	C	A	T	H	E	R	I	N	E	Y
E	U	N	I	O	N	I	C	H	O	L	A	S	S	C
L	N	O	V	G	O	R	O	D	G	A	N	E	P	A
U	I	V	E	T	A	T	S	S	G	T	I	P	A	R
R	T	M	E	O	R	U	R	I	A	I	S	O	L	C
O	U	P	A	I	P	E	L	R	L	P	T	H	L	O
M	(P)	D	A	R	K	I	I	O	U	A	L	T	O	M
A	B	(U)	E	R	X	R	N	B	G	C	E	E	C	E
N	L	M	(O)	N	T	U	E	R	I	X	Y	B	I	D
O	E	W	D	(C)	I	Y	A	V	I	A	C	A	L	Y
V	O	P	O	O	R	N	A	L	P	A	R	Z	B	N
O	N	E	I	C	D	N	E	C	L	O	O	I	U	A
T	I	T	R	Z	S	T	A	L	I	N	W	L	P	S
E	D	E	E	A	S	O	V	I	E	T	N	E	E	T
S	H	R	P	R	E	V	M	I	L	I	T	A	R	Y

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Boris, Call, Capital, Catherine, Class, Collapse, Coup, Crown, Czar, Dark, Democracy, Dynasty, Elizabeth, Exile, Grand, Gulag, Hope, Ivan, Kiev, Lenin, Leonid, Line, Marx, Military, Nicholas, Novgorod, Party, Period, Peter, Poor, Power, Putin, Republic, Romanov, Ruler, Soviet, Stalin, State, Supreme, Union, Votes, Workers, Yeltsin, Yuri

Yesterday's Answer: Twelve

Treasury 4 is available to order by sending check or money order for $10.95 plus $3.25 postage and handling ($14.20 total, U.S. funds only) for the first volume, $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Universal Press Syndicate, Attn: Wonderword, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free, 1-800-255-6734, ext. 6888. Order online at upuzzles.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	**$25**
• 5-Liner	**$35**
• 3-Liner with picture	**$45**
• 5-Liner with picture	**$55**

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

As added service to our valued customers, you may now submit all your JVA placements for announcement/publication in *Saipan Tribune's* print and online edition and KZMI/KCNM at the same time. No more worries of having to go to two different locations every time you need to place job vacancy announcements. Special rates are available for JVA customers under this arrangement.

Print*

• 1st position	**$10**
• 2nd position	**$3**
• Succeeding positions	**$1**

LOWER RATES! Effective Feb. 3, 2007

Combo (Print and Online)*

• 1st position	**$13**
• 2nd position	**$4**
• Succeeding positions	**$2**

Radio (KCNM/KZMI)

• Up to 6 positions	**$5**
• More than 6 positions	**$10**

*These rates apply to all vacancy announcements that include corresponding benefits and which announcements are all under the same company name.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.
- KCNM/KZMI: All ads placed on Friday (9am to 5pm) will be for Monday's radio announcement.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

FOR RENT RESIDENTIAL

Apartment room for rent: Fully furnished 1 brm, T/B, 24-hr water $210/month, near Conwood | Tel. 287-1372, 235-6748

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 HOUSEWORKER (T 3840)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing monthly; $100.00/food monthly; surety bond & medical expense. Contact: Rosa I. Ichihara dba Private @235-7852.

---

1 SYSTEM ANALYST (T 3841)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Housing provided; own food; compensation & medical. Contact: Leticia D. Reyes dba LR Consulting & Construction @285-5646.

---

1 GENERAL MANAGER (T 3842)
Salary:$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & worksmen compensation. Contact: Green Grass Story Co., Ltd. @233-1108.

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1 REPORTER C (T 3843)
Salary:$3.55-$6.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; workmen's compensation provided & medical. Contact: Pacific PUB. & PRTG. Inc. @236-2400.

1 REPORTER C (T 3844)
Salary:$3.55-$6.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; workmen's compensation provided & medical. Contact: Pacific PUB. & PRTG. Inc. @236-2400.

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1 MATERIAL COORDINATOR (T 3845)
Salary:$3.55-$4.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & worksman compensation provided. Contact: Guangdong Dev. Co., Ltd. @288-2288.

1 (KOREAN) TRANSLATOR (T 3846)
Salary:$2,000.00-$2,500.00/monthly. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; health insurance; workers compensation; bonus (depends on profitability of the company); transportation self provided; paid vacation & sick leave. Contact: Ernst & Young (CNMI), Inc. dba Ernst & Young @234-8300.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO VOLUNTARY DISSOLVE A CORPORATION

Notice is hereby given that a Notice of Intent to Dissolve **TUCKERS CORPORATION**, a corporation which is registered in Saipan has been delivered to the Department of Commerce Office of the Registrar of Corporations.

Customers First
TRIPLE J
TRIPLE J SAIPAN, INC.
dba
TRUONG'S Vietnamese Restaurant
is looking to hire a U.S. / Local / I.R.
RESTAURANT MANAGER
QUALIFICATIONS/DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:
- Candidates must be a self starter, qualified & able to assume the manager's position.
- Candidate must have a minimum of 5 years of profitable experience in restaurant management.
- Candidate must have a strong communication skills in English, both oral & written.
- Willing to work nights, weekends, & holidays.
- Plans, develops & implements organization policies & goals.
- Directs & coordinates promotion of products to increase share market & obtain competitive position in the industry.

Competitive Salary & Benefits Package offered.
Salary commensurate with Experience.
Pls. submit resume by way of facsimile or email to the attention of the
Director of Human Resources
Fax: **(670) 234-7347** *Email:* **hrdirector@triplejsaipan.com**

WHATZIT Solution: Bermuda Triangle

1 AUTO PAINTER (T 3847)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: Nenita V. Marquez @234-3647.

---

1 WAITER/WAITRESS (T 3848)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical benefits & workers compensation. Contact: Bianca International Inc. @235-4510.

---

1 HOUSEWORKER (T 3849)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; medical & workmen's compensation are employer provided. Contact: Jessibelle P. Furaggancan @483-2704.

---

1 AIRCON TECHANICIAN (T 3850)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; transportation not provided; workmen's compensation & medical provided by employer as the law request. Contact: Jessibelle Furagganan dba Smart Move Fine Merchandise @235-6683/483-2704.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (T 3851)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; workers compensation insurance & medical as required by non-resident workers act. Contact: Genpro International, Inc. @288-3820.

---

1 MACHINE OPERATOR (T 3852)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Luen Tai Enterprises, Inc. @234-9770.

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1 ELECTRICIAN (T 3853)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 (ASS. ROOMS DIV.) MANAGER (T 3854)
Salary:$1,972.00-$2,200.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER (T 3855)
Salary:$1,972.00-$2,000.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

8 COOK (T 3856)
Salary:$3.55-$6.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 LINEN ATTENDANT (T 3857)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; personal leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 LAUNDRY WORKER (T 3858)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 BAKER (T 3859)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

4 MASSEUSE (T 3860)
Salary:$3.55-$5.37/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

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4 CHEF (DE PARTIE) (T 3862)
Salary:$1,972.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

4 (SUPERVISOR) STEWARD (T 3863)
Salary:$3.55-$5.37/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); sick leave (earned after 90 days of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 ACCOUNTANT (T 3864)
Salary:$3.55-$7.00/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 FRONT OFFICE (SUPERVISOR MANAGER (T 3865)
Salary:$3.55-$5.37/hour. Benefits: Medical coverage expenses; vacation leave (earned after 1 yr. of service); compassionate leave; employee's discount & workers compensation. Contact: Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc. @234-7171.

1 ACCOUNTANT (T 3866)
Salary:$3.25-$7.00/hour. Benefits: Medical provided & workman's compensation. Contact: Century Travel Agency Inc. dba Century tours @234-7171.

3 TRAVEL/TOUR GUIDE (T 3867)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical provided & workman's compensation. Contact: Century Travel Agency Inc. dba Century tours @234-7171.

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1 EXPEDITER (T 3868)
Salary:$3.55-$4.65/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Century Insurance Co., Ltd. @234-0609.

1 UNDERWRITER (T 3869)
Salary:$3.75-$5.30/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Century Insurance Co., Ltd. @234-0609.

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1 STORE MANAGER (T 3870)
Salary:$700.00-$1,700.00/monthly. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: Dasan Corp. dba Downtown Market @233-7755.

1 ACCOUNTANT (T 3871)
Salary:$3.55-$10.50/hour. Benefits: $275.00/housing; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Dasan Corp. dba Downtown Market @233-7755.

1 BUTCHER (T 3872)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Dasan Corporation dba Downtown Market @233-7755.

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1 BARTENDER (T 3873)
Salary:$3.55-$4.00/hour. Benefits: Medical & workman's compensation to be provided by employer. Contact: Niizeki International Saipan Co., Ltd. @234-5050.

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1 TRAILER DRIVER (T 3874)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

2 CARPENTER (T 3875)
Salary:$3.55-$3.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

1 MAINTENANCE MECHANIC (T 3876)
Salary:$3.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

1 PAINTER (T 3877)
Salary:$4.25/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

2 HEAVY EQUIPMENT MECHANIC (T 3878)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

1 CRANE OPERATOR (T 3879)
Salary:$3.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

4 HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR (T 3880)
Salary:$3.75-$4.25/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

1 CARPENTER (T 3881)
Salary:$3.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

1 MASON (T 3882)
Salary:$3.75/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: GPPC, Inc. @234-7900.

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1 (DIVING) SPORTS INSTRUCTOR (T 3883)
Salary:$7.00/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Luka & Ben Corporation Inc. dba L&B Marine Sports @233-3666.

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1 MAINTENANCE MECHANIC, ENGINE (T 3884)
Salary:$3.55-$5.00/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Y.M. BM Corporation @235-5078.

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1 MANAGER (T 3885)
Salary:$700.00-$1,700.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Doo Ri Corporation dba Dawoori Tour @483-1157.

1 (GENERAL) MANAGER (T 3886)
Salary:$800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Doo Ri Corporation dba Dawoori Tour @483-1157.

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2 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (T 3887)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: Han Nam Corporation dba Han Nam Market @288-9290.

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1 MANAGER (T 3888)
Salary:$800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Provenance Incorporated @234-3010.

1 ACCOUNTANT (T 3889)
Salary:$4.00-$5.50/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: Provenance Incorporated @234-3010.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (T 3890)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: Provenance Incorporated @234-3010.

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1 AIRCON TECHNICIAN (T 3891)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employer provide housing; self provide food; medical & workmen. Contact: EEA Corporation dba Edison Airconditioning & Ref. Serv. GEDS Ret. & Gen. Merchandise @288-6192.

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1 (GEN.) BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (T 3892)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $50.00/housing deduction; $50.00/food deduction; medical & workman compensation provided. Contact: Juan C. Aguon dba JV's House Rental @256-0272.

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1 WAITRESS/WAITER (T 3893)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical insurance & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Pacific Fang Hui Corp. dba Hotlegs Bar @233-3885.

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1 COOK (T 3894)
Salary:$3.05-$3.15/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Tomorrow Co., Ltd. @233-0720.

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1 COOK (T 3895)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: J.T.M. Corporation @233-5436.

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1 MANAGER (T 3896)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical expenses company provided. Contact: Triple T. Corp. @287-3780.

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1 (SCUBA DIVING) SPORTS INSTRUCTOR (T 3897)
Salary:$700.00-$1,200.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical expenses & workers compensation employer provided. Contact: Macro Energy Inc. @233-3625.

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1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (T 3898)
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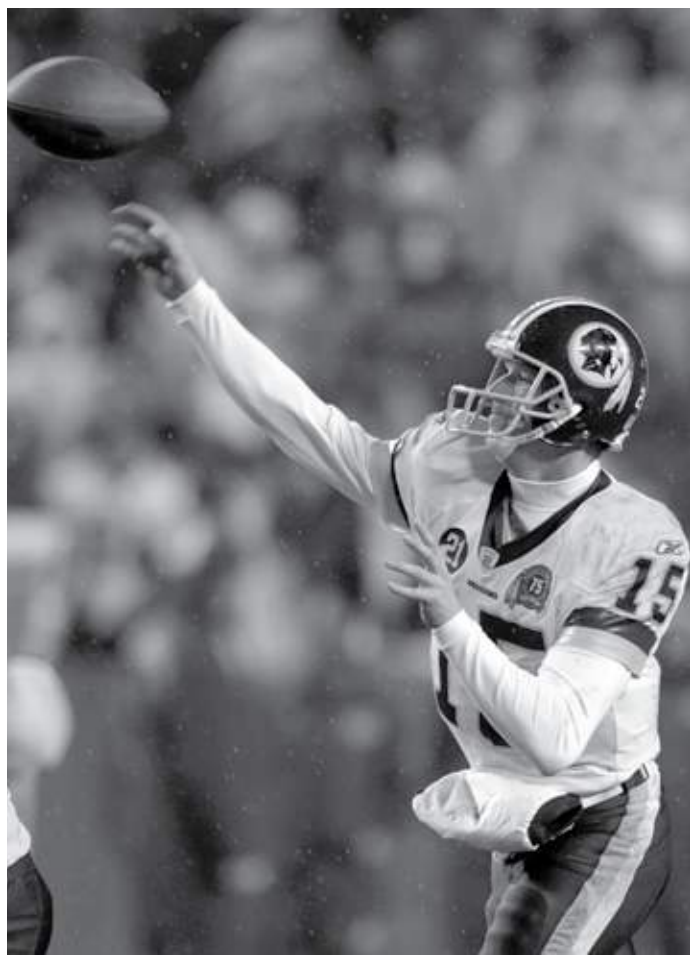
Redskins make playoffs with 27-6 win over Cowboys

LANDOVER, Md. (AP)—The Washington Redskins reached the postseason Sunday with a 27-6 victory over the archrival Dallas Cowboys.

Dallas rested anyone who was questionable with an injury because it had clinched homefield advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

The Redskins (9-7) will travel to Seattle on Saturday for a 4:30 p.m. game, a rematch of a 2005 division playoff won 20-10 by the Seahawks.

Clinton Portis ran for two touchdowns and had 104 yards on 25 carries and 27 yards on four receptions.



AP

Washington Redskins quarterback Todd Collins passes against the Dallas Cowboys during the third quarter of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 30, 2007 in Landover, Md.

Titans 16, Colts 10

In Indianapolis, Kerry Collins spent most of the season waiting for a chance to prove he could still play.

With a playoff spot at stake, Tennessee's backup quarterback delivered the biggest win of the season.

He led the Titans to three second-half field goals, including a 54-yarder from Rob Bironas to retake the lead in a 16-10 victory that left Tennessee celebrating and Cleveland grimacing. The Titans visit San Diego next Sunday.

The Titans (10-6) had to win to make the playoffs for the first time since 2003. A loss would have given Cleveland its first playoff berth since 2002.

Broncos 22, Vikings 19, OT

In Denver, Jason Elam kicked a 30-yard field goal less than a minute into overtime.

The Vikings (8-8) needed a win and a Washington loss to top-seeded Dallas to sneak into the playoffs, but neither the Redskins nor the Broncos (7-9) obliged.

With the playoffs out of his reach, Vikings rookie running back Adrian Peterson settled for the NFC rushing title. He gained 36 yards on 11 carries.

Chargers 30, Raiders 17

In Oakland, California, LaDainian Tomlinson ran for 56 yards to win his second straight rushing title, Philip Rivers threw two touchdown passes, and the Chargers spoiled JaMarcus Russell's first career start.

By ending the season with six straight wins, the Chargers (11-5) beat out Pittsburgh for the No. 3 seed. San Diego will host either Tennessee or Cleveland next Sunday at 4:30 instead of playing Jacksonville, the last team to beat the Chargers.

Ravens 27, Steelers 21

In Baltimore, So Musa Smith ran for 83 yards and a touchdown in his first NFL start, helping Baltimore (5-11) earn its r first victory since Oct. 14 and end a nine-game losing streak.

The Steelers (10-6) had already clinched the AFC North and were locked into a wild-card game at home next weekend. They could have earned the third seed by defeating Baltimore, coupled with a loss by San Diego, but Pittsburgh downplayed that scenario.

Pittsburgh will open the playoffs Saturday night against the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Browns 20, 49ers 7

In Cleveland, Joshua Cribbs returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown, Jamal Lewis rushed for 128 yards and rookie quarterback Brady Quinn made his long-awaited NFL debut as Cleveland San Francisco.

The Browns (10-6), just 4-12 a year ago, would make the AFC playoffs for the first time since 2002 if the defending Super Bowl champions beat the Tennessee Titans (9-6) on Sunday night.

Derek Anderson threw a TD pass to Braylon Edwards and Phil Dawson kicked two field goals as the Browns finished 7-1 at home for the first time in club history.

Bears 33, Saints 25

In Chicago, Devin Hester sprinted 64 yards for a TD with a punt return—his NFL-record sixth kick runback for a score this season to break his own mark set a year ago—and also caught a 55-yard touchdown pass from Kyle Orton.

New Orleans' slim chances hinged on beating the Bears (7-9) and hoping for losses later in the day by the Redskins and Vikings.

Drew Brees set a single-season NFL record for completions (443), passing the previous mark of 418 set by Rich Gannon in 2002. Brees completed 35 of 60 passes for 320 yards with three TDs.

Packers 34, Lions 13

In Green Bay, Wisconsin, Brett Favre extended his quarterback-record consecutive starts streak to 253 games, but didn't keep his helmet strapped on for very long. Favre led the Packers (13-3) to touchdowns on their first three possessions before handing the ball to backup Craig Nall in the second quarter.

The Lions delivered an uninspired performance in going from 6-2 to 7-9.

Falcons 44, Seahawks 41

In Atlanta, Chris Redman gave the Falcons a feel-good finish to an ugly season. Redman set a career high with four touchdown passes, including two to Alge Crumpler, and the Falcons rode three fourth-quarter touchdowns to victory.

The Falcons (4-12) ended a six-game losing streak, giving interim coach Emmitt Thomas his first win in three tries.

Texans 42, Jaguars 28

In Houston, Andre' Davis returned two kickoffs for touchdowns against Jacksonville, who rested many starters with their playoff spot secure. The victory gives the Texans (8-8) a .500 finish for the first time in their six-year history, and their 42 points are a team record.

Davis' returns came on consecutive kickoffs, good for 97 and 104 yards. He became the first player in the NFL this season to return two for scores in a game and the seventh player in league history to achieve the feat.

Panthers 31, Bucs 23

In Tampa Florida, Tampa Bay, resting most of its starters for the playoffs, didn't stop Carolina from treating its season finale as a meaningful game and giving Vinny Testaverde a nice send-off.

DeAngelo Williams rushed for 121 yards and two second-half touchdowns, lifting the Panthers with the retiring 44-year-old Testaverde taking the last snap in the same city where he began his NFL career in 1987.

Testaverde, the first pick in the '87 draft by the Bucs, entered the game after the Panthers stopped Tampa Bay's final drive on downs with 35 seconds remaining.

Bengals 38, Dolphins 25

In Miami, Carson Palmer threw for 316 yards and Miami staggered to the end of the worst season in franchise history. The Dolphins became the eighth team to finish 1-15 and flopped in their audition for new boss Bill Parcells.

Palmer went 23-for-32 and threw for three scores to help the Bengals finish 7-9. It's their first losing season since 2002, the year before Marvin Lewis took over as coach. Palmer finished with 4,131 yards passing to break the Cincinnati record of 4,035 he set last year.

Eagles 17, Bills 9

In Philadelphia, With the Eagles eliminated from a playoff spot, Brian Westbrook still gave their fans a reason to celebrate with a pair of team records.

Donovan McNabb was 29-for-41 for 345 yards, one TD and one interception.

Westbrook set Eagles records for catches in a season and total yards from scrimmage, putting the finishing touches on a Pro Bowl season.

Westbrook's third reception gave him 89 this season, one more than Irving Fryar's total in 1996. He also gained 10 yards on his first carry to set the franchise record for yards from scrimmage. Westbrook finished the season with 2,104.

The Bills (7-9) missed the playoffs for an eighth straight year, establishing the longest drought in franchise history.

Reports: Levy to step down as Bills GM

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—Marv Levy is preparing to step down as Buffalo Bills general manager, according to numerous reports Sunday.

Citing "multiple" unnamed sources, Buffalo's WIVB-TV reported the Bills and the 82-year-old Levy reached "a mutual decision" that he would retire after concluding his second year on the job. The station reported an announcement could come as early as this week.

ESPN.com also cited sources in reporting the decision was reached after the Hall of Fame coach met this week with Bills owner Ralph Wilson.

The news came as the Bills (7-9) closed their season with a 17-9 loss at Philadelphia. Buffalo, knocked out of postseason contention two weeks ago, missed the playoffs for an eighth straight year to establish the longest drought in franchise history.

Levy was not immediately available for comment.

A person with the Bills told The Associated Press on Sunday evening there had been discussion about Levy stepping down, but not until after the NFL draft in April. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because Levy and the team had not announced a decision.

Bills spokesman Scott Berchtold said he was not aware of any decisions made involving Levy's status. Berchtold said Levy did not travel with the team to Philadelphia because of a sinus issue that made it uncomfortable for him to fly.

The Bills, following the game, issued a news release announcing when players would be available to the media on Monday. The release also said both Levy and coach Dick Jauron would be made available to reporters at a later date.

Berchtold noted it's the team's normal practice to make the coach and general manager available after they've had time to assess the year and determine their offseason plans.

Speedy Alabama rolls past Colorado in Independence Bowl

SHREVEPORT, Louisiana (AP)—John Parker Wilson completed 13 of his first 15 passes for 185 yards and three touchdowns and Alabama raced to a four-touchdown lead, then held off Colorado 30-24 in the Independence Bowl on Sunday night.

Colorado's attempt at a multilateral play as time expired collapsed shy of midfield, ending the game.

Alabama (7-6) stopped a four-game losing streak and avoided consecutive losing seasons for the first time in 50 years. Colorado (6-7) finished below .500 for the second straight year, but was vastly improved from a 2-10 mark in 2006.

With the Tide up 27-0, Wilson was in firm control until being chased into an intentional grounding penalty with 5 minutes left in the first half. He threw an interception on his next attempt, leading to a Buffaloes score, and didn't complete another throw in the half.

Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins, meanwhile, recovered from an interception on the Buffaloes' first play and finished the half 9-of-10 for 87 yards and two scores.

Hawkins' 25-yard pass to Dusty Sprague with 4 seconds left in the half cut Alabama's lead to 27-14. It came less than 2 minutes after Hawkins hit Tyson DeVree with a 4-yard scoring pass. Kevin Eberhart's 39-yard field goal in the third period cut it to 27-17.

Alabama amassed 170 yards in the first quarter and had 285 by halftime. Wilson had scoring passes of 15 yards to Keith Brown, 34 yards to Matt Caddell and 31 yards to Nikita Stover.

With Leigh Tiffin's two field goals, Alabama led 27-0 3 minutes into the second quarter and appeared to have Colorado on the ropes. The Buffaloes, who scored 65 points against Nebraska in their previous game, had a first down on their second play from scrimmage but didn't pick up another until 10½ minutes before halftime.

Once Colorado rattled Wilson, though, the Buffaloes' fortunes turned. Hawkins, the son of coach Dan Hawkins, was 8-of-8 on the last two drives of the half.

In the second half, having learned they couldn't beat Alabama's linebackers to the corner, Colorado running backs spread out the Tide defense and cut back against the grain to pick up 5 or 6 yards at a time.

Alabama's new attention to the run opened up routes for Buffaloes receivers. Scotty McKnight, Josh Smith and Tyson DeVree caught passes of 11, 22 and 13 yards for key first downs as Colorado drove for a failed 48-yard field goal try on its first drive after halftime.

The big plays helped limit the Tide to six plays in the third quarter. Hawkins rallied the Buffaloes to 30-24 with a 14-yard pass to DeVree with 3:51 left, following Tiffin's 26-yard field goal.

Tiffin's first-quarter field goals gave him 105 points for the season, the most for an Alabama kicker. Phillip Doyle had 100 in 1989. Tiffin added three extra points and the fourth-quarter field goal, giving him 111 points for the season.

Blazers beat 76ers to win 13th straight

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Brandon Roy scored 22 points and the Portland Trail Blazers rallied to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 97-72 on Sunday for their league-leading 13th straight win.

It is the second-longest winning streak in Blazers history. Portland won 16 straight in the 1990-91 season.

Trailing 63-59 in the third quarter, the Blazers (18-12) went on a 21-0 run over 8:21.

Travis Outlaw sealed the game with an acrobatic dunk, bringing his arm around 180 degrees over a defender and stuffing the ball to make it 82-66. He finished with 12 points, as did James Jones. Steve Blake had 11 points for the Blazers.

Andre Iguodala had 24 points for the 76ers, and Andre Miller added 17 points and 11 assists. The loss snapped a three-game winning streak.

The youngest team in the NBA, Portland started its run with a Dec. 3 victory at Memphis after going 5-12 to start the season. Ten of the team's 13 victories have come at the Rose Garden, where the Blazers are 15-3.

Gordan Giricek, who was traded to the 76ers on Saturday by the Utah Jazz for Kyle Korver, was with the team but didn't play. Giricek had fallen out of favor with Jazz coach Jerry Sloan. He averaged 4.3 points in 22 games for Utah this season and has a career average of 9.8 points in six seasons.

The Blazers led by as many as five points in the first half until Louis Williams' 3-pointer for Philadelphia tied it at 25. The 76ers could not pull ahead and Portland re-took the lead with Channing Frye's layup and Sergio Rodriguez's 3-pointer.

Philadelphia was unde-terred, going on a 14-2 run - capped by Iguodala's dunk - to lead 45-36 at the half.

Miller, who went 0-for-6 from the floor in the first quarter, had 11 points in the second for the 76ers.

Philadelphia pushed its lead to as many as 11 in the third quarter, but the Blazers chipped away, closing to within 61-59 on Blake's 3-pointer.

After Williams made a layup for the 76ers, Jones made three straight free throws for Portland to narrow it to 63-62 at the end of the third quarter - the first points of the 20-0 run.

Outlaw opened the fourth with a 20-foot jumper to put Portland back in front. Roy's left-handed dunk gave the Blazers a 74-63 lead.

Roy, last season's NBA Rookie of the Year, has scored 20-plus points in 10 of the Blazers' games during the streak, and has been honored as the NBA's player of the week twice during the span.

The current streak surpasses the 12-game winning streak the team had in 2001-02. Current 76ers coach Maurice Cheeks was head coach for Portland at the time.

AP

Portland Trail Blazers guard Brandon Roy, left, shoots past Philadelphia 76ers center Samuel Dalembert during NBA second half basketball action in Portland, Ore., Sunday, Dec. 30, 2007.

Celtics 110, Lakers 91

In Los Angeles, Paul Pierce scored 33 points and Kevin Garnett had 22 points, 12 rebounds and six assists to lead the Celtics over the Lakers.

Kobe Bryant scored 22 for Los Angeles, going just 6-of-25 from the floor. Lamar Odom had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

The victory in the final of two meetings between the teams this season ran Boston's NBA-best record to 26-3 and extended its winning streak to six straight. It also ended a four-game winning streak by the Lakers, who still have won 10 of their last 13.

The Celtics prevented Lakers coach Phil Jackson from moving ahead of Boston Hall of Fame coach Ray Auerbach on the career wins ladder. Jackson remained tied with Auerbach for seventh on the all-time list with 938 victories.

Bulls 100, Knicks 83

In New York, Ben Gordon scored 25 points in his second consecutive strong performance since returning to a reserve role, leading the Bulls over the Knicks.

Luol Deng added 17 points for the Bulls, who are 2-0 since Jim Boylan became the interim head coach last week, three days after Scott Skiles was fired. Boylan's first decision was to ask Gordon to give up his starter's role, and it paid off immediately.

Zach Randolph shot only 8-of-23, but had 18 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who have lost four straight and fell to 8-21. Nate Robinson led the New York with 19 points.

Warriors 105, Nuggets 95

In Denver, Baron Davis scored 28 points and Stephen Jackson added 23 to help Golden State beat the Nuggets, ending a seven-game losing streak in Denver.

Carmelo Anthony had 26 points and 10 rebounds for the Nuggets. Linas Kleiza and J.R. Smith added 15 points each for the Nuggets, who saw their season-high seven-game winning streak snapped.

It was a far cry from the last meeting between the teams which Denver won 124-120.

Golden State last won in Denver on Feb. 24, 2003.

Spurs 111, Grizzlies 87

In San Antionia, Tony Parker and Tim Duncan each scored 24 points to help the Spurs beat Memphis, handing the Grizzlies their fifth straight loss.

Duncan also grabbed 17 rebounds, and Parker had nine assists. Michael Finley scored 22 points, including five 3-pointers, for the Spurs.

Pau Gasol led the Grizzlies with 19 points and Rudy Gay, whose buzzer-beating 3-pointer earlier this month gave Memphis its only win over the Spurs this season, added 16.

The Grizzlies have lost eight of their last 10 overall.

Suns 117, Kings 102

In Sacramento, California, Amare Stoudemire scored 31 points and grabbed 17 rebounds to help the Suns beat the Kings.

Shawn Marion made five 3-pointers and had 25 points, Leandro Barbosa scored 22 points, Steve Nash had 12 points and 15 assists, Grant Hill contributed 12 points and Raja Bell added 11.

After the Kings cut the lead to 99-96 on a basket by Dahntay Jones, Stoudemire followed with a dunk, igniting a 12-0 run by the Suns who went ahead 111-96 with 2:12 left.

Prior to the game, the Kings learned Ron Artest could face possible surgery this week to remove chipped bone fragments in his right elbow.

Francisco Garcia scored 31 points for the Kings, who have lost five of six at home.

NBA BRIEFS

Artest could face surgery on right elbow

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Sacramento's Ron Artest could face possible surgery this week to remove chipped bone fragments in his right elbow, a team spokesman said. Artest missed his second straight game Sunday in a 117-102 loss to the Phoenix Suns. The Kings are 2-8 without him in the lineup. He is averaging 19.1 points, 6.1 rebounds and 4.3 assists in 19 games this season. An eight-year veteran, Artest missed the first seven games this season while serving a suspension. He also didn't play in a Nov. 21 game in Phoenix because he was visiting his ailing daughter.

Knicks without starting backcourt against Bulls

NEW YORK (AP)—Jamal Crawford missed the Knicks' game against Chicago on Sunday because of a bruised right hand, leaving New York without its normal starting backcourt. Stephon Marbury was back with the team after missing most of the month following the death of his father, but wasn't in uniform and it isn't known when he will rejoin the lineup. Crawford, who leads the Knicks with 19.2 points per game, was hurt Friday during practice when he banged his hand into a teammate's knee. X-rays before Sunday's game were negative, and the Knicks didn't say how long Crawford would be out. Marbury has played in just three of 13 games since Donald Marbury died during the Knicks' loss to Phoenix on Dec. 2. Nate Robinson and Quentin Richardson started at guard for the Knicks.

Top-ranked Tar Heels crush Valparaiso

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP)—Danny Green matched his career-high with 20 points and sparked the decisive second-half spurt Sunday night to help No. 1 North Carolina beat Valparaiso 90-58.

Tyler Hansbrough had 23 points and 13 rebounds for the Tar Heels (13-0), who got off to a fast start only to see the Crusaders hang around before finally putting the game away with a big second-half run. North Carolina is off to its best start since winning 17 in a row to start the 1997-98 season.

Jarryd Loyd scored 14 of his 24 points in the first half for Valparaiso (10-3), which fought back from an early 17-point deficit to tie the game early in the second half. But the Tar Heels' stepped up defensively while controlling the boards to turn this game into the latest in a series of lopsided victories.

Deon Thompson finished with 11 points, eight rebounds and a career-high five blocks, while Green continued his solid—yet often overlooked—play this season. Averaging 12.6 points off the bench this year, the 6-foot-6 junior went 8-for-10 from the floor and 4-for-5 from 3-point range.

Green also had four rebounds, five assists, three steals and four blocks in 20 minutes.

North Carolina has been on cruise control since a tough 72-68 win against Davidson to open the year, repeatedly rolling up big-margin victories and cracking the 100-point mark in crowd-pleasing fashion. That included a 35-point win against UC Santa Barbara last weekend and a 36-point win against Nevada on Thursday.

The Valparaiso game started the same way, with North Carolina scoring the game's first 13 points and taking a 19-2 lead in the first 9 minutes. The Crusaders, behind Loyd's big half, survived the early blast and fought their way back to within 36-31 at halftime before tying it at 37 early after the break.

But the Tar Heels responded with a 27-2 run over 8 1/2 minutes that made this game end up looking just like all their others in recent weeks.

Green came up big with 11 points and three 3s during the decisive spurt, which ended when reserve Will Graves knocked down a 3-pointer followed by a jumper from the left corner to make it 64-39 with 8:57 to play.

Valparaiso's only basket during the run was Loyd's layup off an inbounds pass with 13:45 left.

North Carolina shot 51 percent and took a 47-31 rebounding advantage while holding the Crusaders to 11-for-32 shooting after the break.

It was North Carolina's first game without key reserve Bobby Frasor, who is out for the season after tearing a ligament in his left knee against Nevada. The injury robbed the Tar Heels of a versatile junior who can play either guard position, and North Carolina's depth at the point was further depleted because senior Quentin Thomas sat out with a sprained left ankle suffered in Friday's practice.

The injuries forced junior swingman Marcus Ginyard, the team's top individual defender, to spend time at the point behind Ty Lawson.

Broken foot sidelines Pitt guard Fields

PITTSBURGH (AP)—Pitt junior point guard Levance Fields will be out eight to 12 weeks after breaking a broken bone in his left foot to become the second Panthers starter knocked out of the lineup in as many games.

Fields was hurt driving to the basket in No. 6 Pittsburgh's (11-1) first defeat of the season, an 80-55 loss in Dayton on Saturday night. He will have surgery Monday on the fifth metatarsal in his left foot, the school said Sunday.

"We're extremely disappointed for Levance," coach Jamie Dixon said. "We expect him to make a full recovery and return sometime later in the season."

Small forward Mike Cook was lost for the year when he tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee in Pitt's 65-64 win over Duke at Madison Square Garden on Dec. 20.

Fields will likely miss the rest of the regular season, including Big East conference play. Pitt's next game is Jan. 2 at home against Lafayette.

He was averaging 11.9 points, 3.8 rebounds and 5.4 assists in 12 starts for Pitt this season, his second as a starter. He had started 49 straight games at Pitt.

Fields' injury leaves Pitt with little depth. Ronald Ramon is likely to replace Fields at point guard, but has been inconsistent this season. Ramon is nursing a sore shoulder and missed all eight shots in the Dayton loss. He is 1-for-15 in the last two games.

Mr. Unorthodox is Mr. Consistency

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Jess "Mr. Unorthodox" Wabol tamed the Saipan golf courses after he brandished his dominating form in various tournaments held throughout 2007.

Wabol began the year by finishing second to Jeff Taylor in the 6th Annual HANMI Charity Classic in March then almost two weeks after won the Championship Flight of the 8th St. Jude Golf Tournament. Both tournaments were held at the west course of the LaoLao Bay Golf Resort.

Wabol was actually just warming up for 2007.

He then completed his title defense in the 5th Annual NMC Foundation Open then added two more crowns in the month of May by claiming the 5th Annual Mt. Carmel Golf Tournament and the 13th Annual San Roque Golf Tournament.

Wabol then capped his amazing and dominating run with another title defense in the 12th Tournament of Champions in August.

Wabol

Swimming schism

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The face of swimming in the CNMI continued to evolve last year when Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan was founded to challenge the over 30-year supremacy of the Saipan Swim Club.

The two rivals clubs—but swimmers from each team are generally friendly to one another—faced off during the All-Schools Swimming Meet in early November but instead of swimming under either Tsunami Saipan or SSC, swimmers from both clubs competed under their respective schools.

The first head-to-head competition between the two clubs occurred a couple of weekends ago during the 2007 Guam International Swim Meet in the Hagatna Pool.

Tsunami Saipan went home with 16 medals—eight were of the gold variety, five were silver, and three were bronze.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Maxi Braig shows off the 20 medals won by the Saipan Swim Club. Braig is joined by teammates, from left, Lester Lapuz, Michael Moran Jr., and Junior Pamaran

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan tankers that part in last weekend's 2007 Guam International Swim Meet show off their medals and ribbons. From left, Shin Kimura, Daniel Villegas, Michael Camacho, Rezne Wong, Marystar Welch, and Kensuke Kimura.

Leading the way for Tsunami Saipan was Rezne Wong's five gold-medal splurge, as the Marianas High School student was first to touch the tile in the boys' 15-and-over 400m individual medley, 100m breaststroke, 50m breaststroke, 200m breaststroke, and 200m IM. The five were the only individual events Wong took part in during the meet.

Seven of the nine-member SSC delegation to the meet, meanwhile, went home with a total of 20 medals after also taking part in the ocean swim.

Led by veteran internationalist Sarah Johnson, the SSC swimmers collected two gold, seven silver, and 11 bronze medals as they held their own against other swimming clubs from Guam, Japan, and the CNMI.

The 15-year-old Johnson led the SSC 20-medal haul swimming away with seven-gold, four silver, and two bronze medals. She won the gold in the 200m backstroke and added the silvers in the 400m freestyle, 50m and 100m backstrokes, and 200m individual medley.

XTERRA set to continue in 2008

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

After announcing in June 2007 that it is pulling out of XTERRA, the Marianas Visitors Authority changed its mind two months later when it confirmed that the premier triathlon will be held on Saipan in 2008—at a minimal cost to the MVA.

"We are having XTERRA at a much cheaper price," said board member J.M. Deleon Guerrero during a meeting last Aug. 1.

Instead of spending over $300,000 to host the event, the authority would spend only about $100,000, he said.

The event will be hosted by Taga Inc. and Team Unlimited.

The MVA had said in June that it could no longer continue its support for XTERRA due to a lack of funding. MVA used to support XTERRA with a $325,000 sponsorship.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
XTERRA Saipan men's and women's division champions, from left, Olivier Marceau and Renata Bucher of Switzerland smile for photographers after winning the sixth edition of the XTERRA Global Series on Saipan on March 17.

In the competition side, the Swiss duo of Olivier Marceau and Renata Bucher continued their dominance by winning the 6th XTERRA Saipan Championships last March 17 at the American Memorial Park.

Marceau and Bucher made it three times in a row, further cementing the two's dominance in conquering the pristine coral-covered blue waters and the technical jungle course of the Global Tour's "Crown Jewel".

Marceau finished the 1.5-kilometer swim, 30-km bike, and 12-km run XTERRA Saipan course in two hours, 27 minutes, and 16 seconds.

Bucher, for her part, took four minutes off her previous time. She had a time of 2:49:00 in her second XTERRA win in 2006 but bested her record when she crossed the finish line in 2:45:08 on her second time around.

NMI spikers earn first win in Pacific Games

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

The CNMI men's beach volleyball team of Mark McDonald and Tyce Mister earned the Commonwealth's first-ever win in beach volleyball in the XIII Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa.

It was a historic win for McDonald and Mister when they scored a 21-10, 21-15 crushing of Papua New Guinea on Aug. 30.

The win was the first in four games for the CNMI men's team in Samoa and the first since the Commonwealth participated separately in the Pacific Games in 1975.

In 2003 the Suva South Pacific Games in Fiji, Mister teamed up with Russ Quinn and lost all their games. Jon Cramer served as their coach.

McDonald and Mister ended up in eighth place in the 12-team field, while inexperience caught up with the women's team of Melissa Halaby and Nina Mosley as they finished ninth in their division.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI's Tyce Mister and Mark McDonald in action against New Caledonia in the XIII Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	26	3	.897	_
Toronto	16	15	.516	11
New Jersey	14	16	.467	12 1/2
Philadelphia	13	17	.433	13 1/2
New York	8	21	.276	18

Southeast Division

Orlando	21	11	.656	_
Atlanta	15	13	.536	4
Washington	15	14	.517	4 1/2
Charlotte	10	18	.357	9
Miami	8	23	.258	12 1/2

Central Division

Detroit	23	7	.767	_
Indiana	15	16	.484	8 1/2
Cleveland	14	17	.452	9 1/2
Chicago	11	17	.393	11
Milwaukee	11	18	.379	11 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Southwest Division

San Antonio	21	8	.724	_
New Orleans	20	10	.667	1 1/2
Dallas	20	11	.645	2
Houston	15	15	.500	6 1/2
Memphis	8	22	.267	13 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	18	12	.600	_
Portland	18	12	.600	_
Utah	16	16	.500	3
Seattle	9	21	.300	9
Minnesota	4	25	.138	13 1/2

Pacific Division

Phoenix	22	9	.710	_
L.A. Lakers	19	11	.633	2 1/2
Golden State	18	13	.581	4
Sacramento	11	18	.379	10
L.A. Clippers	9	19	.321	11 1/2

Yesterday's Games
Chicago 100, New York 83
Portland 97, Philadelphia 72
Golden State 105, Denver 95
San Antonio 111, Memphis 87
Phoenix 117, Sacramento 102
Boston 110, L.A. Lakers 91

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	16	0	0	1.000	589	274
Buffalo	7	9	0	.438	252	354
N.Y. Jets	4	12	0	.250	268	355
Miami	1	15	0	.063	267	437
South						
Indianapolis	13	3	0	.813	450	262
Jacksonville	11	5	0	.688	411	304
Tennessee	10	6	0	.625	301	297
Houston	8	8	0	.500	379	384
North						
Pittsburgh	10	6	0	.625	393	269
Cleveland	10	6	0	.625	402	382
Cincinnati	7	9	0	.438	380	385
Baltimore	5	11	0	.313	275	384
West						
San Diego	11	5	0	.688	412	284
Denver	7	9	0	.438	320	409
Kansas City	4	12	0	.250	226	335
Oakland	4	12	0	.250	283	398

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
East

Dallas	13	3	0	.813	455	325
N.Y. Giants	10	6	0	.625	373	351
Washington	9	7	0	.563	334	310
Philadelphia	8	8	0	.500	336	300
South						
Tampa Bay	9	7	0	.563	334	270
Carolina	7	9	0	.438	267	347
New Orleans	7	9	0	.438	379	388
Atlanta	4	12	0	.250	259	414
North						
Green Bay	13	3	0	.813	435	291
Minnesota	8	8	0	.500	365	311
Detroit	7	9	0	.438	346	444
Chicago	7	9	0	.438	334	348
West						
Seattle	10	6	0	.625	393	291
Arizona	8	8	0	.500	404	399
San Francisco	5	11	0	.313	219	364
St. Louis	3	13	0	.188	263	438

Yesterday's Games
Atlanta 44, Seattle 41
Green Bay 34, Detroit 13
Cincinnati 38, Miami 25
Chicago 33, New Orleans 25
Houston 42, Jacksonville 28
Philadelphia 17, Buffalo 9
Carolina 31, Tampa Bay 23
Cleveland 20, San Francisco 7
Washington 27, Dallas 6
San Diego 30, Oakland 17
N.Y. Jets 13, Kansas City 10, OT
Baltimore 27, Pittsburgh 21
Denver 22, Minnesota 19, OT
Arizona 48, St. Louis 19
Tennessee 16, Indianapolis 10

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rising tennis stars Heo, Minor

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Without a doubt the CNMI's top age group division champions Ji Hoon Heo and Thea Minor had a banner year in several local and off-island junior tennis tournaments last year.

Heo began 2007 by winning the 2006 Male Student Athlete of the Year award given by the Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association. He then won three consecutive singles titles in the PIC-Pepsi Tennis, UMDA-CNMI Junior Tennis, and DFS Micronesia Tennis tournaments in a period of three months.

Heo was also a member of the CNMI-dominated North Pacific Qualifying team that competed in the 2007 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Lautoka, Fiji. He left early along with Mayuko Arriola to train at the ITF training facility Fiji.

Heo

He then finished second to Daneric Hazelman of Fiji in the Pacific-Oceania Junior Championships and before the year ended, earned an ITF exemption in Oceania junior events and an invitation to be part of the ITF-Oceania touring team in Australia.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Thea Minor, third right, with ITF Pacific Oceania Junior touring team members at Rainbows End Park, Auckland, New Zealand. From left Chris Hargrove, Annie Shannon, Tarani Kamoe, Tony O'Connell, Chris Sami, and Elias Tukarao.

Before leaving for Australia, to join the rest of the ITF-Oceania touring team, Heo won the singles crown in the Fall Classic and 4th Taga Tennis tournaments.

He left last week to compete in three separate tournaments in Australia from Jan. 3 to 15, 2008.

Minor, meanwhile, capped her amazing run with four trophies that she won as part of the ITF-Oceania touring team in New Zealand in December.

Minor ended her New Zealand trip by finishing second to teammate Kamoe in the 2007 Auckland Christmas Tennis Tournament. She suffered a 5-7, 2-6 decision against the Fijian in the finals.

Minor previously won the girls' 12-and-under singles crown in the Coca-Cola Waikato Junior Open 2007, then placed second again to Kamoe in the 2007 Poverty Bay East Coast Ray White Christmas Junior Tennis.

She teamed up with Kamoe to grab the girls' 12-and-under doubles title in the Poverty Bay tournament.

Other titles that she won in separate tournaments on Saipan are the doubles division of the PIC-Pepsi tennis tournament with mother Joy and the singles plum where she played in the 12-and-under boys class; the doubles crown in the DFS Micronesian tournament with Cleofe Santos, and claimed the singles title UMDA tennis singles crown.

She was also a member of the NPQ team where she again placed to Kamoe in the Oceania Plate.

Back-to-back perfect games for Robert

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Top bowler Robert Talavera made history by rolling his third and fourth career perfect games in back-to-back nights during the September King of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament at the Saipan Bowling Center last Sept. 23 and 24.

The 37-year-old Minalin, Pampanga native, playing in lanes three and four, rolled 12 consecutive strikes using his trusty Brunswick Fury in the third game of Sept. 24's four-game roll-off.

A day after recording his third career perfect game playing in lanes 11 and 12, Talavera continued his scorching run, knocking down 237 in his first game. His second game, however, was an anomaly as Talavera finished with a pedestrian 163 before erupting with a perfect 300 in the third game.

He capped off his unbelievable two-night stint at the San Jose bowling venue with a 927 for an average of 231.75, second only to the 947 and 236.75 he rolled on Sept. 23.

Talavera's back-to-back perfect games were the 11th and 12th in the CNMI and the third last year following Efren Cacdac's 300 game on June 22, 2007, in the Friday Night League at Capital Bowling Center.

Talavera

Benny Pangelinan was the first CNM bowler to roll a perfect game on March 10, 1982. Nine days later Jaime Sasamoto duplicated the feat when he hit 300 on March 19, 1982.

It would take nearly 22 years before the CNMI saw another 300 game when Jonathan Hensley bowled a perfect game on Feb. 10, 2004, and it appeared the youth kegler's accomplishment opened the floodgates as it was followed by Dannie Robles' perfect game on Aug. 26, 2005.

Talavera and youth bowler Raymond Zapanta did the trick three days apart on Feb. 15 and 18, 2006, with Talavera following it up with his second 300 game in July 15, 2006.

Richard Leong and Arnel Del Rosario joined the club a mere 10 days apart with Leong rolling his on July 24, 2006, followed by Del Rosario's on Aug. 2, 2006.

With the exception of Cacdac's and Robles' 300s, all perfect games in the CNMI were rolled at the Saipan Bowling Center. Cacdac and Robles struck bowling gold at the Capital Bowling Center, a venue considered far harder to roll every bowler's dream.

Tanapag Falcons soar anew

JON PEREZ
Tanapag Falcons coach Manny Evangelista holds a portrait of CNMI fallen soldier Staff Sgt. Wilgene Lieto as the rest of the team celebrate their win in the Budweiser-Saipan Major League finals.

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

The Tanapag Falcons completed their own happily-ever-after ending in the Budweiser-Saipan Major League when they swept the Bob O'Connor-Saipan Masters to capture the 2007 season crown.

The Falcons won the best-of-five title series to end an almost 30-year title drought to return to the top of the baseball scene. They completed the sweep with a come-from-behind 10-9 win over the Masters in Game 3 on June 28 .

Both teams also recorded a first in the 25-year history of the SML since this was the first time that third- and fourth-seeded teams played in the finals.

But history sided with the Falcons as a third-seed team had already won the SML crown four times, while a No. 4 squad has yet to be crowned in the league.

The first third-seed team to win the SML title were the YCO Royals in 1983. The Duty Free Express won the pennant that year, while the Hafa Adai Express both took home the pennant and championship crowns in the inaugural SML in 1982.

It took 11 years before another third-seed team won the SML title when the Toyota Wheels did the trick in 1994. The Miller Lite Brewers followed in the Wheels and the Duty Free Express' footsteps when they won the crown in 2000.

The Ford Rangers, before the Falcons' win last Friday, became the last third-seeded team to overcome all odds to win the SML crown when they defeated the Northern Yankees in the 2005 best-of-five title series.

The Falcons, with manager Doru Camacho and coach Manny Evangelista also dedicated their victory to fallen soldier Staff Sgt. Wilgene Lieto, his wife Tiara, and their entire family.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
Michael Hall, left, of the CNMI steals the ball away from Guam's Zachary J. Pangelinan in their preliminary competition playoff match in the 2007 East Asian Football Championship on March 25 at the Civic Center Field at the Oleai Sports Complex.

NMIFA makes debut in EAFF

By MARK RABAGO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

CNMI Men's National Football Team made its debut in the East Asian Championship when it took on Guam in two separate occasions last March 25 and April 1.

Close to 1,000 fans watched how the CNMI stood its ground against Guam at the Oleai Sports Complex when the hosts absorbed a 2-3 loss against their island neighbors in Game 1 last March 25.

A week later, the rag-tag CNMI team suffered a stinging 0-9 shutout loss against Guam as their island neighbors finally flexed their football muscle at their home field. The win earned Guam the chance to face the winner of the Hong Kong-Macau match last July.

Aside from its debut in the East Asian Football Federation tournament, Northern Mariana Islands Football Association also continued to grow the world's most popular sport in the Commonwealth by holding successful men's, women's, co-ed, and youth leagues in 2007. The association also flew in professional coaches (Ichiro Fujita and Thomson Tam-sun Chan) and players (Incheon United and St. Patrick's Athletics' Ryan Guy) for football clinics in 2007.

Blazers beat 76er to win 13th straight

Brandon Roy scored 22 points and the Portland Trail Blazers rallied to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 97-72 on Sunday for their league-leading 13th straight win.

25

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Redskins make playoffs with 27-6 win over Cowboys

The Washington Redskins reached the postseason Sunday with a 27-6 victory over the archrival Dallas Cowboys.

24

Senior, Big Leaguers are 2007's best

JON PEREZ

The CNMI Big League All-Stars pose for a group photo after one of their practice sessions at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

For bringing honor to the CNMI while playing the islands' No. 1 sport, the CNMI Senior and Big League All-Stars are the top sports stories of the past year—2007.

The two all-star teams from the Commonwealth advanced to their respective World Series after beating their opponents in the 2007 Asia-Pacific Regional Tournament held in Hagåtña, Guam from June 26 to 30.

Both CNMI teams earned the World Series berths by sweeping their opponents in the weeklong tournament participated in by host Guam and the Philippines.

The Saipan Senior League All-Stars saw action at the Shawn T. Mansfield Stadium in Bangor, Maine; while the J.B. "Red" Owens Complex in Easley, South Carolina hosted the Big League World Series.

TOP SPORTS STORIES 2007

The Senior All-Stars ended up with a 2-2 record to force a three-way tie with Canada representatives Whalley Little League of Surrey, British Columba and eventual champion South Region's Cartersville Little League of Cartersville, Georgia.

The CNMI's accomplishment duplicated its third place finish in Pool A in the 2004 World Series. Guam, which represented the Asia-Pacific region in 2005, also placed third after its four games in pool play, while the Philippines ended up with a 1-3 slate last year.

The loss also dropped Asia-Pacific's head-to-head match up against Canada to 1-3 since 2004.

The Senior League team members were John Iguel, Marley Techur, Giovanni Ayuyu, Vicente Cepeda, Ryan Ada, Phillip Manalo, Ben Leo Guerrero, Nathan Kintol, Derrick Nedlic, Vicente Cabrera, Anthony Rogolifoi, Anthony Tenorio, Ofero Taitano, and Jonathan Salas.

Juan I. Tenorio managed the team with Darren Flores and Ike Taitano acting as his coaches.

In the Big League division, despite a 12-9 win over EMEA in their final game the CNMI still finished third after suffering from consecutive losses against Latin America I and II.

The team won its opening game against Canada representatives District III of Fraser Valley, British Columbia, 12-7, at the J.B. Owens "Red" Owens Sports Complex in Pope Field Road in Easley, Couth Carolina. The victory over Canada last July 28 was only the third time the Commonwealth won a game in the Big League World Series.

It was also the CNMI's second time to beat Canada after the Commonwealth, representing the Far East region in the 1998 World Series, defeated the same team thanks to consecutive over-the-fence home runs by Peter Tomokane.

It also marked the CNMI's fifth time representing the Asia-Pacific region. The first time that the CNMI went to the World Series was in 1997, when the region was still known as the Far East.

The team—managed by Eliseo "Chel" Castro and coached by Phil Celis and Wally Emul—was composed of John Mafnas, Shane Yamada, Brandon Santos, Jesus Iguel, Nicolas San Nicolas, Leroy Dela Cruz, Nunu Kapileo, Cadez Tenorio, Jesse Borja, A.J. Allen, Vicente Sablan, Jr., Martin Pangelinan, Shane Mendiola, Smith Reyes, and William Fleming.

Team CNMI was not that lucky in the Little League and Junior League regional tournaments. The Saipan Little League, despite a 4-0 sweep in the Pacific pool, suffered a 0-12 thrashing from Asia pool topnotcher Li-Shing Little League of Taichung, Chinese-Taipei while the Junior leaguers dropped all of their assignments in Indonesia.

JON PEREZ

Senior league All-Star member Anthony Tenorio helped the CNMI finish at joint third with Canada in the Senior League World Series held from Aug. 12 to 18 at Bangor, Maine.

Bennet

Runners Omar and Bennett break records

By JON PEREZ
REPORTER

Tyrone Omar and Yvonne Bennett had record-breaking feats for the CNMI in separate competitions from August to September.

Omar had a field day as he three times broke the CNMI 100m sprint record.

He first broke the 11.12-second finish he set in the 2006 World Youth Championships in Beijing China when he clocked in at 11.09 seconds during the Oceania Grand Prix Series held from Aug. 16 to 19 at Barlow Park in Cairns, Australia.

That record did not last long as he continued with record-shattering run in the month of August, again shattering his own mark in the 100m sprint at the start of the 11th IAAF World Championships at Nagai Stadium in Osaka City, Osaka, Japan.

Omar, running at lane 4 in the first heat with World co-record holder Tyson Gay overcame hot weather conditions in Osaka and stole the show at Nagai Stadium by registering a new CNMI National record off 11 seconds to eclipse the 11.09 he set in the Oceania Grand Prix.

Omar then decided to raise the bar when he competed in the XIII Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa in September when he again broke his 11.00-second record by establishing a 10.99 seconds time to in the semi-finals of the 100m dash.

Qualifying for the semifinals of the century dash, Omar finished ninth overall and was .01/10th of a second behind Papua New Guinea's Henry Ben, 10.98. He led up to about 90 meters in the semis of the 100m run, but the rest of the runners caught up with him in the final 10 meters.

Omar also broke the CNMI national record of 23.23 seconds in the 200m run when he registered a new time of 22.40 seconds also in the Pacific Games.

Bennett made her record-shattering feat in the century dash at the 11th IAAF World Championships on Aug. 26 at Osaka City, Osaka, Japan.

Bennett trimmed further the CNMI National Record of 13.57 seconds that she set in the High School All Island Track & Field Meet in Guam last May 20 when she clocked in at 13.16 seconds.

The Kagman High School student, who ran in the second heat with Jamaica's Veronica Campbell, was fourth best among the Pacific Islanders competing in the nine-day 203-nation championships at Nagai Stadium.

Incidentally, Bennett also ran in the second heat when she established the 13.57 former national record in Guam this year.

Omar